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ILLUSTRATIONS OF LEAVES.—Plate 1.

CONVERSATIONS

ON THE

BOTANY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"THE WONDERS OF THE DEEP."

WHEN I look upon the poor little herbs that arise out of the earth, and consider the secret spark of life that is in them, that attracts, increaseth, groweth, seminateth, preserves them and their kinds; the various virtues that are in them for the food, medicine, and delight of more perfect creatures; my mind is carried up to the admiration, and adoration, and praise of that GOD, whose wisdom, power, and influence, and government, are seen in these little footsteps of his goodness. So that take all the wisest, ablest, and most powerful and knowing men under heaven, they cannot equal that power and wisdom of thine that is seen in a blade of grass.—SIR MATTHEW HALE.

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CONTENTS.

	Page.
CHAPTER I.	
The Visit,	9
CHAPTER II.	
Some preparatory remarks on the study of botany, . .	14
CHAPTER III.	
The almond and almg trees,	27
CHAPTER IV.	
Aloe, anise, apple, ash,	35
CHAPTER V.	
Balsam tree or balm of Gilead, box, bramble, bulrush, .	45
CHAPTER VI.	
Camphire, cane, cassia, and cinnamon,	56
CHAPTER VII.	
Cedar, cypress, cummin, citron, orange, lemon, coriander, .	68
CHAPTER VIII.	
Corn, cockle, cucumber, carob tree,	82
CHAPTER IX.	
Fig tree,	96
CHAPTER X.	
Fir, flags, flax, frankincense,	111
1*	(5)

	Page,
CHAPTER XI.	
Gopher wood,	121
CHAPTER XII.	
Gourd of Jonah, galbanum, grass,	123
CHAPTER XIII.	
Heath, hemlock, hyssop, juniper, lentiles, lily,	142
CHAPTER XIV.	
Mallow, mandrake, manna, mint, mulberry, mustard, myrrh,	153
CHAPTER XV.	
Myrtle, nettle, nightshade, nuts, oak,	170
CHAPTER XVI.	
Olive, onion, garlic, leeks,	182
CHAPTER XVII.	
Palm tree,	193
CHAPTER XVIII.	
Pomegranate, poplar, plane tree, rose, rue, saffron,	205
CHAPTER XIX.	
Shittim wood, shittah tree, spikenard,	216
CHAPTER XX.	
Thorns, thistles, tares, thiyine wood,	229
CHAPTER XXI.	
Vetches, vine, willow, wormwood,	240

LIST OF PLATES.

- No. 1.—(Frontispiece) Illustrations of leaves.
- No. 2.—Illustrations of flowers and modes of flowering.
- No. 3.—Aloe.
- No. 4.—Camphire or altheena, (from Calmet.)
- No. 5.—Ancient cedar of Lebanon.
- No. 6.—A species of Egyptian wheat, (from Calmet.)
- No. 7. A branch of the sycamore fig, (from Calmet.)
- No. 8.—The fruit of the sycamore fig, (from Calmet.)
- No. 9.—Oriental gourd.
- No. 10.—Date palm.
- No. 11.—Pomegranate.
- No. 12.—Spikenard, *nardus indica*, (from Calmet.)
- No. 13.—Spikenard, another variety, (from Calmet.)



BOTANY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

CHAPTER I.

"Is it possible that I am never to find you disengaged, my dear Mrs. Howard?" said a gay acquaintance of this lady, as, on entering her parlor one evening, she found her seated by a table covered with books busily employed in writing.

"I trust," said Mrs. Howard, as she extended her hand to her friend, "you have never found me so much occupied that I could not welcome you cordially."

"I did not intend," replied Mrs. Selby, "to complain of any want of hospitality, but, I confess, I felt somewhat chagrined this evening to see you so immersed in your studies; for having been apprized of the unusual circumstance of your daughters being engaged out to-night, I determined to pay you a visit, in order that we might enjoy one of those long, sociable evenings we used to have before you became so wedded to your maternal duties, and before I——"

"Became so gay," said Mrs. Howard, smiling.

There was a pause of a few minutes, and Mrs. Selby's usually animated countenance was overspread with a look of deep sadness. "The world thinks me happy," she exclaimed, with a sigh; "but it is not such happiness as you enjoy, Anna: there

is an aching void nothing can fill, and, to tell the truth, I came here to-night in hopes of obtaining some assistance from you on this subject. I know that you are a Christian, and that would be a sufficient answer to many who might inquire into the cause of your uniform cheerfulness; but this is not all; at least I find many of whose piety I cannot entertain a doubt, who are often depressed in spirits. But whenever I come into your parlor I find you with a sweet, cheerful countenance, and your daughters always employed and always happy. I know you are generally at home, and yet your blooming girls declare, Mamma never lets the winter evenings appear tedious. Pray tell me what plan you pursue, what magic you employ, to obtain this end."

"Since you desire it, my dear friend, I will speak to you of my simple domestic system with the same unreserve we were accustomed to use in our youthful days, and if I dwell too much on my own views and feelings, you must pardon me. You know that I conscientiously restrict my children from many of the recreations in which their young relatives are engaged. But while I feel obliged to act thus, I remember, at the same time, that they are full of youthful hopes, and fond of cheerful pursuits, and therefore consider it no less my duty on the other hand to provide them with such employments and recreations as are innocent. Were I to interdict those amusements from which they find other young people deriving pleasure, and then leave them to brood over the privation, without substituting any

thing in their place, I should fear it might disgust them with religion. While I have unreservedly told them that I felt myself obliged to avoid certain compliances with the customs of the world, I have endeavored not to dwell so much on the sinful indulgence, as to form their tastes to different pursuits, and lead them to purer and higher sources of enjoyment. I consider full occupation of time a great point with young persons; it prevents weariness, and affords fewer opportunities for dwelling on forbidden gratifications.

In order more fully to let you into my simple, quiet method of making my girls happy keepers at home, I will tell you what was the nature of my occupation when you came in. I always endeavor to devise some plan for the employment of the long winter evenings, which may prevent them from bringing weariness to my children's minds. This year I have proposed to them to make a list of the different plants mentioned in the Scriptures, which I will undertake to illustrate with all the information I can collect. Thus, you see, a double advantage is gained; for they have a task to discharge which arouses their interest and employs their time, while in the performance of it their knowledge of the Scriptures will be increased. And now tell me what you think of my plan."

"It is very good, I have no doubt, Anna, but I should soon be dreadfully wearied with it. I become tired of being constantly in the society of my children, and feel glad to leave them with their teacher."

“But, dear Sophia,” said Mrs. Howard, with deep feeling, “let us remember this is not a mere question of agreeability :—we are mothers, and as such have a most solemn responsibility resting upon us, which we cannot devolve on any other human being. We have both, my dear friend, brought our children to the altar of God, and there dedicated them to him ; we have had them solemnly signed with the sign of the cross in token that they shall not be ashamed to confess CHRIST and him crucified ; to fight manfully under his banner against the world, the flesh, and the devil ; and if we, by negligence or dread of trouble, become unfaithful to our vows, and suffer their feet to be entangled in the world, who, who can avert the awful responsibility from us !”

Mrs. Selby was deeply moved, her conscience was painfully roused, she felt self-condemned, and threw herself weeping on the bosom of her friend. She promised, after a long and unreserved conversation, to try to devote herself more faithfully to her children ; but, alas ! the impression was like the morning cloud and the early dew, and soon faded away. Each returning evening, as it closed in on Mrs. Howard, found her cheerfully, unweariedly, seeking to discharge her duties to her little flock, who on their part were full of quiet enjoyment, while Mrs. Selby was again drawn into the current of worldly pleasure ; her children were neglected, and their home became only a scene of weariness.

Is it not to be feared that even among professing Christians many a mother may be found who has

never reflected seriously whether it is not a duty incumbent on her to provide proper occupation for the *minds* of her children, even, if necessary, at no small expense of time and trouble, instead of feeling satisfied with keeping them out of positive evil? Many Christian mothers strive conscientiously not to allow their daughters to idle any of their time, and keep them busily employed with the needle, while little or no regard is paid to that mental idleness in which they are passing away their existence. The hands may be constantly occupied, while the thoughts are frittered away upon subjects that are perfectly trifling, or, what is worse, may be engaged in unhallowed musings. The writer of this little book would be most truly thankful if she could be instrumental in rousing *only one mother* to a sense of her solemn responsibility, and if her humble volume is found capable of affording innocent amusement to a family circle, she will consider herself amply repaid for her time and trouble.

CHAPTER II.

And GOD said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself upon the earth : and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind : and GOD saw that it was good.—*Gen. i. 11, 12.*

YOUNG persons are generally prompt in entering upon new undertakings, and the air of novelty will often be sufficient to interest them at first in projects which, after they have been tried, may cease to yield pleasure.

It was very probably, in some degree, owing to this cause that the daughters of Mrs. Howard looked forward so anxiously to the time when their mother would be able to enter upon the execution of the plan she had suggested for their improvement, as well as entertainment, during the evenings of the ensuing winter. This was devised, as we have noticed in the preceding chapter, for the purpose of promoting their knowledge of the vegetable productions mentioned in the holy Scriptures.

It required some time for Mrs. Howard to collect information on the subject, and in the interval the young ladies were employed an hour during every evening in making out a neatly-written list of the botanical specimens referred to in the Bible. After they had executed this portion of the allotted task, they

undertook to collect the texts in which these plants were referred to, and to arrange them in order for their mother's use.

It was on one of the early days of December, that Mary Howard, with an animated countenance, informed her mother that she and her sister Harriet had completed their part of the work, and she remarked that they were now ready to enter upon the anticipated enjoyments of their new undertaking whenever it was convenient and agreeable for their mother to do so.

On the following evening, when the tea equipage was removed, the table neatly arranged, and the young ladies seated at it with their work boxes, Mrs. Howard, to the no small satisfaction of her daughters, produced their list and various books of reference, which she laid on the table by the side of the large family Bible.

The tender feelings of the mother appeared blended in her countenance with the holy expression of the Christian, while she regarded her children for a few moments in silence. She then said, "Let us not, my beloved children, presume to enter upon a study, particularly one which is connected with the word of God, without first imploring his assistance who alone can render it truly serviceable to us."

She then reverently and feelingly offered up the following beautiful prayer, in which her children joined with her.

"Blessed LORD, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we

may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience, and comfort of thy holy word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour JESUS CHRIST.

“Direct us, O LORD, in all our doings, with thy most gracious favor, and further us with thy continual help, that in all our works, begun, continued, and ended in thee, we may glorify thy holy name, and finally, by thy mercy, may attain everlasting life, through JESUS CHRIST our Lord.”

When she had concluded, Mrs. Howard paused for a few moments, and then remarked, “Before we proceed to the description of any of the plants enumerated in your list, it will be necessary, or at least advisable, for me, my dear girls, to make a few preparatory remarks on the study of botany. This is one of the sciences which I have always intended you should study regularly, on various accounts.* In the first place, because I think there is scarcely any part of creation which is so freely opened to our inspection, which exhibits such proofs of wisdom and design, as the vegetable world. And besides this recommendation, I wish you to pursue the study for its own sake, as I consider it one of the richest sources of innocent enjoyment to youthful and inquiring minds. It gives a zest to a walk through

* The ideas in this chapter are principally taken from Sir James E. Smith's Introduction to Botany. Sometimes his words are used.

the country that one who has never studied botany can scarcely realize. You will find that it is not necessary to have the beautiful and rare flowers of the garden to excite your admiration and interest: even a humble weed, which before you have passed by unnoticed, will present much to delight you after you have become botanists. An interesting writer remarks that ‘the vegetable kingdom expands every where before us an immense portraiture of the divine mind, in its contriving skill, profuse imagination, conceiving genius, and exquisite taste; as well as its interesting qualities of the most gracious benignity and the most benevolent munificence. The various flowers we behold are the annual heralds and ever-returning pledges of his continued goodness, of his desire to please and to benefit us, and therefore of his parental feelings toward us. The thunder, the pestilence, and the tempest, awe and humble us into dismaying recollections of his tremendous power; but the beauty of his vegetable creations, the flowers and fruit more especially, remind and assure us of his unforgetting care, of his condescending sympathy, of his paternal love, and of the same affectionate benignity still actuating his mind, as first influenced him to design and execute such lovely and benevolent productions, that display the minutest thought, the most extraordinary skill, and the greatest personal kindness.’”*

“Yes, dear Mother,” remarked Mary, “your ob-

* Turner’s Sacred History of the World; Letter iii.

servations are indeed correct; and you know our Saviour himself sent his disciples to the lilies of the field for instruction."

"If we would obey, my dear Mary," replied her mother, "the direction of our blessed LORD in this instance, and take up any plant, however humble a one, and examine its wonderful structure, the exact suitableness of its different parts to perform their proper functions, we should find a piece of machinery so nice and so intricate as would compel us to adore continually that gracious Being whose Spirit rules universal nature. Not a freckle, streak, or stain, in their rich coloring but shows the touch of his unrivalled pencil.

"In order to make you understand better the wonderful mechanism displayed in the vegetable creation, I will give you a brief description of the formation of plants. In the first place, every living plant, from the most delicate grass up to the loftiest tree, is covered with an outer skin, which botanists call the cuticle, and which answers to the thin scarf skin which covers our bodies. You know that there is a great variety in the thickness of this part of the animal body: for instance, what can be more delicate than the thin skin of a young infant, or what, on the contrary, coarser than that of the elephant or rhinoceros, and yet they are both adapted to discharge the same office to the bodies to which they belong.

"In the same manner you may with your penknife peel off a thin transparent skin from the leaf of the

rose or lily, or you may examine the thick rough skin of the oak, and the botanist will tell you that these two things, apparently so unlike, perform the same functions to their respective bodies.

“This cuticle, both in the animal and vegetable system, appears to be essential to sustain life, it protects from the air, and admits the passage of fluids from within and without. Immediately under this outer skin is another substance, generally of a green color, which you will find in every leaf also. Then comes the bark, which in the branches and trunks of trees that are of some years’ growth, consists of several layers; the innermost of these is termed the liber or inner bark, and it is in this one that the necessary vital functions are carried on; when these are performed this inner bark is pushed outward, and becomes a lifeless crust, like the produce of former years, and a new liber is formed.

“‘It is in the bark that the peculiar virtues of particular plants chiefly reside, more especially in the layers nearest the wood. It is here we find, in appropriate vessels, the resin of the fir, the bitter properties of the Peruvian bark, and the aromatic oil of the cinnamon tree.’* ”

“After you have removed the bark from a tree or shrub, you will next discover the wood, which forms the principal bulk of the tree. I have had a log of oak wood brought into the parlor in order to show you the peculiar formation of the wood and bark. I

* Smith.

have had it placed, you see, in an upright position, in order that you may observe it better. Do you know, Harriet," continued Mrs. Howard, "that I can tell you the age of the tree from which this log was taken, though I have no idea when it was cut, or where it grew?"

Harriet exclaimed, "How is that possible, Mamma? and yet I am sure you must have some means of ascertaining the fact, because I know you never assert any thing without you are convinced of its truth."

Mrs. Howard then called the attention of her daughters to the different circular rings in the bark and wood of the oak log: she told them that it had been satisfactorily ascertained that each year's growth in trees was marked by one of these additional circles. She requested them to observe one striking difference in the rings of the bark and of the wood; it was this, that in those of the bark the outer ones are the darkest, and the color gradually becomes lighter in each as they approach the central or woody part; while on the contrary, in the wood itself, the centre is the darkest and most solid in its texture, while the outermost circle of all is the whitest, the most porous, and also much the widest. This circumstance, Mrs. Howard informed her children, being observed by botanists, had led to repeated experiments, by which it had been clearly ascertained, not only that the addition to the bark of trees was made each year by a new inner layer, but also that the wood, on the contrary, has the ring of

fresh wood which is added annually, and which is termed the alburnum or new wood, formed on the outside of those which mark the growth of former years; and consequently the new wood and the new bark are joined together. "I will not, my dear children," said Mrs. Howard, "detain you now by attempting to explain the different theories as to the way in which the new bark and wood of each year are formed, but will leave that to another day, when you shall have entered on the regular study of this delightful science.

"The centre of the plant or tree is called the pith or medulla. We next come to the sap vessels, respecting which very incorrect opinions prevailed in former days. You are both, I believe, aware of the fact that every vegetable body contains a number of little tubes; but if you have never examined these with a microscope, you can scarcely understand how very curiously these little vessels are arranged, and how differently in various plants. You have often, in your childish sports, wounded the maple or buttonwood, and applied your mouth to the opening, in order to draw out the juice or sap. This appears to answer to our blood, and to be just as essential to life in the vegetable creation as that is to its continuance in the animal world. The nourishment which the tree or plant receives from the earth is absorbed by the root, and there becomes sap, and from hence the numerous little sap vessels carry it up into the remotest leaves, and into the flowers and fruit: much the greatest part is carried into the

leaves, which are wonderfully contrived to act as lungs to the plant to which they belong; and in them the sap is exposed to the light, air, and moisture. Mr. Knight, an English gentleman who has turned his attention particularly to this subject, and has made some very interesting discoveries, thinks he has ascertained satisfactorily that the sap, after being perfected in the leaves, is carried from them by another set of vessels back again into the branches and trunk, and there forms the inner bark, which is enabled, in its turn, to form the alburnum or new wood of the next tree. The character of the sap is much altered after it has passed through the leaves and bark, and it is at this period that it is supposed to form those peculiar secretions which characterize particular plants. It is then, for example, that the sap of the fir makes its deposit of resin in the bark."

When Mrs. Howard paused, her daughters expressed the pleasure they had derived from the short account which their mother had given them of the process of vegetation, and which they said afforded them most astonishing proofs of the wonderful skill displayed by God in this part of creation. "Indeed, Mamma," observed Mary, "I little thought what a curious machinery existed in the humblest flower, and I hope I shall hereafter derive more profit and pleasure from my garden."

"Yes, my dear children," continued Mrs. Howard, "we have indeed only to search into the wonders of nature in order to have our ideas of the wisdom and



Fig 1



Fig 2



Fig 3



Fig 4



Fig 5



Fig 6



Fig 7



ILLUSTRATIONS OF FLOWERS AND MODES OF
FLOWERING.—Plate 2.

love of our heavenly Parent continually increased. While we are speaking upon this part of our subject, I cannot refrain from reading you an extract from Sir James Edward Smith's Introduction to Botany, in which he gives a remarkable proof of the skill and contrivance of the Creator in the arrangement of the sap vessels: he says, 'It is curious to observe, not only the various secretions of different plants or families of plants, by which they differ from each other in taste, smell, qualities, and medical virtues, but also their great number and striking difference frequently in the same plant. Of this the peach tree affords a familiar example. The gum of this tree is mild and mucilaginous; the bark, leaves, and flowers abound with a bitter secretion of a purgative and rather dangerous quality, than which nothing can be more distinct from the gum. The fruit is replete, not only with acid and sugar, but with its own peculiar aromatic secretion, on which its flavor depends.' Can we doubt that He who constructed this one tree in such a manner, that all these distinct and singular processes should be carried on silently within its trunk, is a God infinite in wisdom, power, and love. I have already," observed Mrs. Howard, "detained you longer than I intended with these preparatory remarks, and shall therefore be obliged to postpone the entrance upon our subject regularly until to-morrow evening. Before we conclude I shall give into your hands a few representations of different kinds of leaves* and of modes of

* For illustration of leaves, see frontispiece.

flowering, which I shall have occasion to describe in the progress of our work. Botanists have certain terms to designate these peculiarities, and I cannot well avoid using them occasionally, though I shall endeavor to do so as seldom as possible; and in order that you may understand these terms, I have prepared a few plates for illustration, which you can refer to when required."

The books and work boxes were now removed, and the household of Mrs. Howard were all assembled for the devotions of the evening; a duty with which nothing was allowed to interfere.

CHAPTER III.

THE ALMOND TREE AND THE ALMUG TREE.

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and take of every one of them a rod according to the house of their fathers, of all their princes according to the house of their fathers, twelve rods: write thou every man's name upon his rod. And thou shalt write Aaron's name upon the rod of Levi: for one rod shall be for the head of the house of their fathers. And thou shalt lay them up in the tabernacle of the congregation before the testimony, where I will meet with you. And it shall come to pass, that the man's rod whom I shall choose shall blossom: and I will make to cease from me the murmurings of the children of Israel, whereby they murmur against you. And Moses spake unto the children of Israel, and every one of their princes gave him a rod apiece, for each prince one, according to their fathers' houses, even twelve rods, and the rod of Aaron was among their rods. And Moses laid up the rods before the LORD in the tabernacle of witness. And it came to pass, that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness; and behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds.—*Numbers* xvii. 1-8.

It has been remarked by some writer, that one of the chief sources of enjoyment to youthful minds is that which they derive from the pleasure of anticipation: we will not pretend to decide the point in general, and will content ourselves with the observation that Mrs. Howard's daughters looked forward with great satisfaction to the evening on which they were to enter upon the examination of the botany of

the Bible, and when it arrived they seated themselves by the side of their beloved parent, with countenances beaming with innocent pleasure.

Mrs. Howard commenced the conversation in the following manner:—"I have thoroughly examined your list of the vegetable productions mentioned in the holy Scriptures, and highly approve of your plan of arranging the plants in alphabetical order; but after going through the whole, I observe the omission of one article, for which I must demand a reason, as it is one of the first trees mentioned by Moses, and is also connected with consequences of too momentous a kind to the whole human family to be passed by unnoticed."

"I can form a conjecture, I believe, dear Mother, as to your allusion," said Mary; "is it not 'the tree of knowledge of good and evil?'"

"You are right," replied her mother, "and now I must require the reasons for excluding it from your list?"

"We debated the point, Mamma," she replied, "but finally concluded to omit the name of this tree, as we felt doubtful whether it was not used in a figurative sense only."

"With regard to this subject," replied Mrs. Howard, "I shall merely relate to you the observations of some eminent commentators on the passage. Dr. Adam Clarke thinks 'the term tree of life, or life-giving tree, may refer possibly to those medicinal trees, herbs, or plants, whose healing virtues are of great consequence to man in his present state, when

through sin diseases of various kinds have seized on the human frame, and have commenced that work of dissolution which is to reduce man to his primitive dust.' And he afterward remarks that though 'this explanation may be a general meaning for general terms, yet it is most likely this tree of life which was placed in the midst of the garden, was intended as an emblem of that life which man should ever have lived provided he had continued in obedience to his Maker.' And here," continued Mrs. Howard, "I must not omit to point out to your notice an affecting proof of the mercy and tender consideration of our heavenly Father, which is presented by the fact that he has laid up a rich stock of wholesome medicine in the plants of the field for the relief, or at least alleviation, of those numerous painful maladies which sin has brought into this world. Thus, while we see our tender and wise Parent, with one hand extending, as it were, reluctantly, the rod to punish us, his rebellious children, we behold him with the other strewing over the surface of the globe innumerable vegetable productions, which are most admirably adapted to soothe and mitigate those sufferings which his justice rendered it necessary for him to inflict.

"The learned Calmet, in his celebrated work, the Dictionary of the Bible, an authority to which you will find me often referring, remarks, 'With regard to "the tree of knowledge of good and evil," speaking now as naturalists, and under that character only, we say that probably this plant had some inju-

rious, perhaps inflammable, principle in it: some poisonous quality whereby it was utterly unfit for human food, being injurious to the human constitution. This was a natural reason why death should attend the partaking of it; yet it might not be immediately fatal to all creatures which partook of it, and hence Eve might think it safe for herself, as it appeared to be for them. I may safely illustrate my notion by reference to the machineel apple-tree of the West Indies, under which, if a traveller reposes, he suffers for it. If it rains while he stands under it, and the drops fall on his flesh, they raise blisters; if he touches any of the sap of the branches, or the juice of the leaves, it poisons the parts which receive it; if he eats of the apples, he dies: yet parrots eat of them and do not die, but their flesh acquires a property of rendering those who occasionally feed on their flesh very sick. We must, by the term "tree of knowledge of good and evil," understand, not a tree capable of imparting knowledge, but rather a tree appointed to determine whether man would, by his choice, by obedience or disobedience, appropriate to himself good or evil. ' "

When Mrs. Howard had finished reading the above passage, her daughters expressed their thanks to her, and they both agreed that it had thrown considerable light on a passage of Scripture which had been hitherto very obscure.

She then turned to Harriet, her younger daughter, saying, " You have placed the almond at the head of your catalogue of plants and trees: can you

give me the passages of Scripture in which this tree is noticed?"

"I have, Mamma," answered Harriet, "committed to memory the seventeenth of Numbers, in which the directions were given to Moses to prepare the twelve rods that he was to lay before the tabernacle, out of which God chose one, to mark in which tribe the priesthood was to be fixed. This rod of Aaron's is said to have 'budded, brought forth buds, bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds;' but I do not understand what meaning is intended to be conveyed by these expressions."

"There were probably various reasons, my dear, for this figurative representation, but the fact was so miraculous, (the fruit of the almond generally following long after the blossoming,) as to convince the Israelites of God's intentions that the priesthood should remain in the tribe of Levi. Dr. Clarke very beautifully remarks, 'The buds of good desires, the blossoms of holy resolutions, and the ripe fruit of faith, love, and obedience, all spring from the priesthood of JESUS CHRIST.'

"We will now," continued Mrs. Howard, "proceed to the description of the almond tree or amygdalus, which is generally from twelve to fourteen feet in height. The *amygdalus communis*, or common almond tree, I have seen occasionally growing in this country in the open air, but our climate is too severe for it. In appearance it resembles the peach tree, except that the blossoms of the almond are of a very pale pink, and the green leaves are narrower than

those of the former-named tree. The shell of the almond, like that of the peach, is enclosed in a fleshy fruit. The almond tree of the East bears a profusion of white blossoms, and thus, when covered with its snowy flowers, it was employed by Solomon as an emblem of the hoary head of the aged man. For when the marks of old age are noticed by him in Ecclesiastes, in a figurative manner, among other circumstances, this is mentioned, 'The almond tree shall flourish.'

"The Hebrew word for this tree is said to signify 'to watch,' in commemoration, probably, of its being one of the first of the vegetable creation that awakes from the wintry slumber in which all nature is wrapped for so long a time. I cannot, in this place, my dear children, refrain from calling your attention to that mighty, but mysterious work which is carried on by the great Creator and Upholder of all things, on each returning spring. Our favorite poet beautifully describes the change, when the commands of the Almighty are issued; when by some unseen agency he communicates his powerful impulse, the sap which had lain dormant for months, locked up in its reservoirs, (the roots of trees and plants,) is at once stimulated to action; the fluid, which but lately was apparently lifeless, receives its Maker's commands, and, like the favored servant of God in former times, it bursts at his word from its prison-house, and rises to newness of life; it mounts the parent trunk, it diffuses itself through those branches which till then had 'been barren as lances,'

and immediately the whole are clothed with rich and beautiful foliage. I have frequently sat for hours, on one of the early days of spring, lost in adoring thoughts of the faithfulness and truth of Him who for thousands of years has never failed in his promise, 'that summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, shall not fail.' As I have watched inanimate nature thus promptly obeying His commands, and considered the machinery at work, even in the humblest herb; as I have listened to the rough gales of March lending their aid to carry on the designs of God's providence in agitating the trunks and branches, and thus promoting the progress of vegetation by the increased circulation of the sap, I have asked myself whether man alone, among all God's works, could refuse submission to his commands: man, the creature made in his own image, after his own likeness, and whom he has loaded with such innumerable benefits, whom he has loved even when he was dead in trespasses and sins, and for whose salvation he has not spared his own Son.

"But," said Mrs. Howard, "I must now return to our list, and notice the second name on our catalogue: can you recollect the texts which refer to it?"

ALMUG TREE.

"We cannot find the almug tree, Mamma, noticed in any part of the Bible except in 1 Kings x. 11, 12, where it is said, that 'the navy also of Hiram, that brought gold from Ophir, brought in from Ophir great plenty of almug trees and precious stones.

And the king made of the almug trees pillars for the house of the LORD, and for the king's house, harps also, and psalteries for singers: there came no such almug trees, nor were seen unto this day. ”

“I am sorry, my dear children,” said Mrs. Howard, “that I am able to give you but little information on this subject. By turning to 2 Chron. ix. 10, 11, you will find another notice of this same event: instead of *almug trees* the words *algun trees* are used, and this is considered by many as being probably the most correct orthography. In some translations the same words are rendered *lignum vitæ* trees. In the Arabic, they are said to be translated colored wood, and this, it is not unlikely, is the most proper term, as we know that there are several kinds of wood brought from the East Indies which are shaded beautifully in different colors: such as the Brazil wood and the rosewood. Some of the old Jewish Rabbins translated these words uniformly as ‘coral,’ but this idea does not appear to be well founded, particularly if we recollect the uses to which Solomon devoted the almug trees. Coral could not have been found (unless that of ancient times differed exceedingly from what we find in modern days) of sufficient size to have been formed into pillars for Solomon’s temple.”

Mrs. Howard now looked at her watch, and observed that the lateness of the hour reminded her that it was time to close the studies of the evening.

CHAPTER IV.

ALOE, ANISE, ASH, APPLE.

Thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia.—*Ps.* xlv. 8.
Nicodemus brought a mixture of *aloes* and myrrh, about a hundred pounds weight.—*John* xix. 39.

“I HOPE, my dear children,” said Mrs. Howard, “that you remember the beautiful Psalm from which our notice of the aloes is taken?”

“We do, Mamma,” answered Mary; “for it is a favorite with us, and particularly so, from its coming to our minds associated with the happy feelings connected with Christmas-day, as we then generally hear it read in church.”

“The heart of David appears to swell with joy,” continued Mrs. Howard, “while he celebrates in this Psalm, the praises of his King, his long-anticipated Messiah. And, as the excellent Bishop Horne remarks, ‘From the throne, the sceptre, and the inauguration, the prophet passes on to the robes and palace of the King of glory, declaring, that as the perfumed garments of an earthly prince scatter through all the royal apartments a grateful fragrance, so from the glorious vestments of our High Priest, is diffused the sweet savor of his heavenly graces, filling those happy regions of joy and gladness, where he keeps his residence above, and by the

communication of the SPIRIT refreshing the faithful on earth with their odors.' ”

“There is another interesting text in which the aloes is mentioned,” remarked Mary; “I mean the verse which describes Nicodemus bringing the hundred weight of aloes and myrrh to anoint the body of JESUS.”

“I have always loved that verse also,” replied her mother; “for it shows how the criminal fear of man was overcome in the heart of this disciple by the power of divine grace. When Nicodemus was first introduced to us in the gospel he dared not venture to visit JESUS by day, lest he should be exposed to ridicule or persecution. His first lessons from the lips of his divine Master were delivered under the shades of night; his Saviour’s compassionate bosom pitied the infirmities of this inquirer after truth; he patiently instructed him, and doubtless Nicodemus continued to receive lessons of godliness from time to time; and this seed of divine grace was not choked or lost, but sprang up and bare fruit, until the once timid disciple became so strong in the power of divine grace, that he was not afraid to go boldly and crave the body of his murdered Master, that he might render to it the last solemn marks of his love.

“We will now,” said Mrs. Howard, “proceed to the examination of the aloe,* which comes asso-

* See the notice of the aloe in the *Encyclopedia Americana*, from which this account is taken.



One blossom of the American Aloe.



BARBADOES ALOE.—Plate 3.

ciated with such interesting ideas to our minds. The genus aloe is a very extensive one, and includes some species not more than a few inches in height, while others rise to the great altitude of thirty feet. Indeed a plant of the American aloe, or agave Americana, which was planted in the garden of the king of Prussia, rose to the height of forty feet. These two genera of the aloe and agave, both of which have the vulgar name of aloe, resemble each other so closely that a common observer would scarcely detect any difference between them except in the different situation of the seed vessel, which, in the plants belonging to the former genus, is formed above the base of the corolla or flower leaves, while in those of the agave family it is situated below it. The blossom is funnel shaped,* and in a great proportion of the species it is of a yellow color. The stem which bears the blossoms is woody in some of the larger varieties, and rises from the centre of the leaves, and grows to the height of twenty feet when in a state of perfection. Branches shoot forth from the main stalk on every side in such a manner that a complete pyramid of flowers is formed of the most splendid appearance. There is an idea prevalent that the American aloe will not bloom until it has reached the age of a hundred years, but I believe there is no foundation for this opinion.

The green leaves of all the different varieties of the aloe are very thick and fleshy, and they generally

* See plate 3.

have their edges beset with spines. The prickly, or rather thorny character of these plants renders them very serviceable, in some parts of the East, in forming fences which are impenetrable to cattle. There is one species of aloe which is a native of Mexico, and which is used by the inhabitants of the country for a variety of purposes. 'It serves,' as we are informed in the *Encyclopedia Americana*, 'to make hedges for enclosures; its trunk supplies beams for the roofs of the houses, and its leaves are used instead of tiles. From this plant they make also their thread, needles, and various articles of clothing, and cordage; while from its juices they manufacture sugar and vinegar. Some parts of it they eat, and others they apply in medicine.' "

"I think, Mamma," said Harriet, in a laughing tone, "that one of these trees would be quite a fortune in itself, if we could be so happy as to procure it. Is it possible that there can still be any further purposes to which the aloe can be applied?"

"Yes, my dear, on the authority of the work I have just quoted, I can assure you that 'the negroes of the western coast of Africa make ropes and weave nets from the fibrous parts of the leaves. The Hottentots hollow out the stems of one species into quivers for their arrows; and in Jamaica there is a variety which supplies the inhabitants with bow-strings, fishing-lines, and materials from which they weave stockings.' "

"Which part of the aloe," inquired Mary, "was employed in embalming?"

“The juice, my dear, which is exposed to the sun, and thickens gradually by evaporation until it becomes of the consistence of a gum. It is said that the reason why it was used in embalming is, that it possesses the property of preserving bodies from putrefaction. You know the royal Psalmist speaks of the aloe as if it was employed as an article of perfume, for he remarks, ‘Thy garments smell of myrrh, and *aloes*, and cassia.’ Now, in order to explain this, I must inform you that there is a species of this large and useful family, which grows in Egypt, which has spotted leaves of a foot in length, and bears yellow blossoms; the flowers are so fragrant that the Egyptians often deposite them in houses recently built, in order to dissipate the vapor. It is most probable, that as Judea and Egypt were so near to each other, and as articles of merchandise were passing continually from one country to the other, that the blossoms of this fragrant plant, or some perfume obtained from them, might have been carried to the royal residence at Jerusalem, as an article of Egyptian luxury.

“The resinous part of the gum aloe is insoluble in water, and hence it has been found, when combined with tallow, turpentine, and lead, a very good preservative of ship timber from the attacks of marine worms. ‘In the East Indies the juice of this plant is used as a varnish to preserve wood from the attacks of destructive insects, and skins are smeared with it for the same purpose. There is a tract of mountains about fifty miles north of the

Cape of Good Hope, which is wholly covered with aloes. Among the Mohamedans, and particularly in Egypt, the aloe is a kind of symbolic plant: it is devoted to religious purposes, and pilgrims on their return from Mecca suspend it over their doors, to show that they have performed their holy journey.' ”

When Mrs. Howard had finished the account of the aloe, her daughters expressed their satisfaction, and observed that they had no idea previously that any one kind of tree or plant could serve such a variety of purposes.

“Notwithstanding your surprise at my account, you will find,” said Mrs. Howard, “that when we come to the notice of the palm tree, the aloe may still be exceeded by another member of the vegetable world, in its capacities for usefulness.

“We shall now pass from the stately aloe to the humble anise, mentioned by our Lord as constituting part of the tithes of the proud Pharisees.”

ANISE.

Ye pay tithes of mint, anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith; these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the others undone.—*Matt. xxiii. 23.*

“Anise seed is the production of a plant called the *Pimpinella anesum*, which bears its blossoms in an umbel,* like the parsnip and carrot; it is a native of several countries of the East, particu-

* See plate 2, figure 4.

larly Egypt and Syria. The seeds, which were the part of the plant that were tithed by the Jews, are somewhat round, and flattened on one side, and marked with little lines from the top to the bottom. They have a very strong aromatic odor, and it is the oil made from them which gives the peculiar smell to the paregoric elixir; they are likewise used in other medicinal preparations.

“Most probably our LORD intended to convey a particularly forcible reproof to the self-righteous Pharisees, in the verse you have selected, for you will remark that it was not the tithe of a costly plant, or of one which required trouble to cultivate, which they were so ready to bring to God as a compensation for their omission of that offering which he demands so positively, namely, the heart with all its affections, as a living sacrifice: they tried to find a substitute in that ‘which cost them nothing;’ for as the anise grew wild in Judea, it could most probably be collected with little trouble or expense.”

Mrs. Howard again took up her daughter’s list, and she then observed, “I perceive you have noted down the apple tree, and with it the text in which Solomon says, ‘A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.’ It is also noticed in two or three other places in the Old Testament, but as the Hebrew word is generally allowed to denote the citron, which is emphatically a golden fruit, we will defer any further consideration of these verses until we come to the citron.”

ASH.

He planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it.—*Isa.* xliv. 14.

“The ash you have also added to your list: this tree is not mentioned, I believe, in any other instance in Scripture, excepting in this one verse, and Calmet remarks that even here the original denotes rather a tree shaking, as if by the wind: so that he thinks it most probable the prophet rather intended to designate a poplar than an ash; as the former tree is remarkable for its tremulous motion. But the hour warns me to lay aside these discussions for the present.”

CHAPTER V.

THE BALSAM TREE OR BALM OF GILEAD, THE BOX,
THE BRAMBLE, AND THE BULRUSH.

And they (Joseph's brethren) sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and behold, a company of Ishmaelites came from Gilead, with their camels bearing spicery, and *balm*, and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt.—*Gen.* xxxvii. 25.

And Israel said unto them, (his sons,) If it must be so now, do this; take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little *balm*, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds.—*Gen.* xliii. 11.

Is there no *balm* in Gilead? Is there no physician there.—*Jer.* viii. 22.

Judah traded in honey, in oil, and in *balm*.—*Ezek.* xxvii. 17.

“WE have been quite impatient, dear Mother, for our evening's entertainment,” was Harriet's remark, when the family circle assembled at the usual hour, “and particularly so, because the *balm* is so closely connected with the history of our favorite Joseph.”

“I am quite as desirous as you can be, Harriet,” said her mother, “to resume our botanical pursuits, and therefore I will proceed without delay to the description of the *balm* of Gilead, or celebrated balsam tree of the East.

“Calmet appears to think that there is some reason to doubt whether the *balm* which the Ishmaelites were bearing into Egypt, and that which the aged Israel directed his sons to take with them, in

order to propitiate the favorite of Pharaoh, was really the same article as that which has since been so celebrated as the balm of Gilead. The reason which he gives for his opinion is this: that if we admit them to be the same thing, we must then contradict the authority of the historian Josephus, who affirms that this highly-prized tree was first brought into Judea as a present from the queen of Sheba to Solomon. He, therefore, as well as some other writers, thinks it probable that the balm alluded to in the history of Joseph, was only the resin or turpentine which was obtained from the juice of the turpentine tree, and which was an article of commercial traffic between Judea and Egypt. Having said thus much on this part of the subject, we will now examine the notices of the balm of Gilead.

“ This tree is known by botanists under the name of *amysis gileadensis*, which is said to signify ‘father of scents,’ or very sweet scented. It is a low tree or shrub, which grows to the height of fourteen or fifteen feet. Its branches are numerous, spreading, and crooked. The leaves are small, of a bright green, and growing by threes together; or, as botanists term this mode of growth, they are ternate.* The flower consists of four leaves, it is small and white, and each grows on a separate footstalk. The fruit is a small egg-shaped berry, and contains a smooth nut. The whole plant yields a most grateful perfume, and when the pulp of the berry is

* See frontispiece, figure 4.

pressed, it furnishes a white and sweet-scented balm. The wood, also, constitutes an important article of commerce, and is brought into Egypt, where earthen vessels for carrying water are impregnated with the smoke of it, in order that they may contract by this means a certain flavor which is agreeable to the Egyptians."

"Of what parts of the world is this delightful tree a native?" inquired Mary.

"It is," said her mother, "a native of Judea, and Josephus informs us that it grew in the greatest perfection near Jericho. It is also found in Syria and in Abyssinia, along the coasts of the Red Sea to the Straits of Babelmandel."

Mary asked her mother whether the balm ran from the tree naturally, or whether it was obtained by artificial means.

"It is said to exude from the tree in a moderate degree, but the balsam is principally obtained by making incisions in the bark. Mr. Bruce informs us, 'that the trees are cut with an axe in the months of August and September, which is the time when the sap is in the most active state of circulation. The juice, as it oozes through the different wounds, is received into small earthen bottles; and every day's produce is collected together, and poured into a larger bottle, which is kept closely corked. The juice of the balsam tree, when first received into the bottle, is of a light yellow color, and far from being clear. As it settles and cools, it loses this milky appearance, and becomes transparent: it is then of

the color of honey, and increased in thickness. The smell is at first highly pungent, and when rashly inhaled affects the brain with the same sensation as that given by volatile salts. The quantity procured from each tree is small; the very young trees seldom yield more than three or four drops, while sixty can be obtained from the larger and more fertile ones. The process of collecting the balsam is consequently very tedious and troublesome, and it is rarely to be met with in purity.'

"Lady Mary Wortley Montague, when at Constantinople, could procure but a little, and even that was obtained with difficulty. The commerce in this celebrated balsam has been carried on from remote antiquity. The ancient historians of Greece and Rome speak of it, and Tacitus declares that the possession of the balsam tree and the palm tree is one of the circumstances which gave Judea a superiority over his native Italy, with all her beauties. In Turkey, even at the present day, it is highly valued as a medicine and as a fragrant perfume; but in Europe, and in our own country, it is not more highly esteemed than some of our own balsams 'for its medicinal properties.'"

THE BULRUSH.

And when she (the mother of Moses) could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein ; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink. And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him. And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river ; and her maidens walked along by the river's side : and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it. And when she had opened it, she saw the child : and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children. Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go, and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee ? And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went, and called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the woman took the child, and nursed it. And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses : and she said, Because I drew him out of the water.—*Exod. ii. 7-10.*

There are, we imagine, but few young persons possessing affectionate hearts, who can read this simple narrative of the early history of the infant Moses without emotion : it interests us deeply for the mother and her children, and it is particularly calculated to arouse our sympathy when we contemplate it as a single specimen of that dreadful oppression and bitter servitude under which the unhappy Jewish nation was suffering at that time. These verses were peculiar favorites of Mrs. Howard's daughters, and Harriet recited them feelingly at the request of her mother. When she had finished, she said, "How very sad the heart of Jochabed must

have been when she placed her beautiful little Moses in his ark of bulrushes among the wet flags on the banks of the Nile. Though I have read the account so often, Mamma, I find it always brings the tears to my eyes. I think she must have given him many a tender kiss, and shed many tears, before she could make up her mind to leave her dear babe in such a desolate condition, and particularly at his helpless age. I have often fancied I could see her going and returning, again and again, and hanging over him with eyes full of tears, before she could finally desert him."

"Undoubtedly she did feel most deeply, my dear," replied Mrs. Howard, "but we must not doubt that God gave her faith to sustain her in that hour of trial, the unspeakable bitterness of which perhaps no one but a tender mother can fully estimate. Our gracious Father never calls his children to trials like this without at the same time providing them with corresponding strength to endure them, if they are only willing to submit. His promise is pledged that 'as our day, so shall our strength be;' and the Christian mother is often made to feel its truth, when her Lord calls upon her to resign her beloved babes, not to the flags of the Nile, indeed, but to the cold and silent grave."

Here Mrs. Howard's feelings for a time overcame her so far as to make her unable to proceed: for she had been made to realize the depth of a mother's sorrow, at such an affliction, and the power of divine grace in supporting under it.

When she was composed enough to resume the conversation, she continued:—

“We will turn from the consideration of the mourning Jochabed, and try to imagine her joy when she received the message from the princely daughter of Pharaoh, requiring her to come and supply a mother’s place to her beloved babe: when she found him once more in her arms, and as she folded him, in the fulness of her love, to her maternal bosom, do you not think she must have raised a heartfelt prayer of thankfulness to Him who had thus blessed her?”

“There are still other notices, Mamma,” said Mary, “of the bulrush, besides that most interesting one which Harriet has recited. In the eighteenth chapter of Isaiah and the second verse, the prophet speaks of some heavy woes that were to come on a nation ‘that sendeth ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of bulrushes, upon the waters.’ And then again, alluding to a scene of deep humiliation, it is said, ‘I bowed my head as a bulrush.’”

“The prophecy you have quoted, Mary,” replied her mother, “is considered by various commentators as referring to Egypt more especially, as it is well known that the Egyptians commonly navigated the Nile in light vessels, formed of reeds.

“Both Calmet and Dr. Clarke think it probable that the bulrush of which the ark was constructed, in which the mother of Moses placed her beloved child, was in reality the same with the celebrated papyrus or Egyptian reed. This plant grows in the marshy ground along the banks of the Nile. The

root is very hard and large: the stem stout and naked, except immediately at the base, and the plant grows to the height of eight or nine feet: the stalk is triangular above, and terminated at the top by a wide-spreading and beautiful umbel* surrounded by a crown of eight large sword-shaped leaves. The flowers are small and not striking, disposed in little scaly spikelets, which are placed at the extremity of the rays or stalks which form the umbels. It is an aquatic plant, and the lower part of it is always immersed in water. It grows not only in Upper and Lower Egypt, but also occasionally in the Jordan and in Sicily. Though the papyrus was used occasionally by the ancients instead of paper, yet this was by no means the only purpose to which it was appropriated. Even in modern times, the Egyptians employ it in making sails and cordage, and in the early ages, we find it noticed frequently as being used in ship building. The historian Pliny observes, 'Of the papyrus they construct sailing vessels in Egypt;' and another ancient author says that 'the Egyptian boat is formed of the soaking papyrus.'"

"Can you tell us, Mamma," inquired Mary, "in what manner these vessels were made, for they seem to me to have been insecure contrivances for navigating the waters of the Nile?"

"The boats are said to have been formed," replied her mother, "by weaving the stems of the papyrus

* See plate 2, figure 4.

closely together, and then coating them on the outside with a resinous substance, in order to make them water-proof. A modern traveller discovered such vessels in use in Abyssinia, and he tells us that 'although they resemble baskets, they were still the only boats he found in use among the natives.' "

" 'There is another point, dear Mother,' said Harriet, "on which I must trouble you for information, which is, how the ancients prepared the papyrus for writing? "

" 'The skins or fibres were separated in thin layers from the blades of the grass, and spread upon a table which had been previously moistened with water from the Nile, which water is said to possess a somewhat gummy character. These layers were then wet with the same water in a hot state, and laid upon those which were already on the table; these were then pressed, dried in the sun, and smoothed. According to Pliny, the sheets which were in most general use by the Romans, were generally about thirteen inches wide. Before the Spanish conquest of Mexico, the inhabitants of that country were in the habit of manufacturing the leaves of the agave or aloe into paper, somewhat in the same manner.' " *

* Encyclopedia Americana.

BOX TREE.

I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together : that they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD hath done this, and the holy One of Israel hath created it.—*Isa.* xli. 19, 20.

The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box tree together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary, and I will make the place of my feet glorious.—*Isa.* lx. 13.

The box tree, *buaus sempervirens*, is a shrubby, evergreen tree, which grows to the height of twelve or fifteen feet. It has small oval leaves growing opposite to each other. It receives its name from its flourishing in perpetual foliage. From the circumstance of its retaining its leaves throughout the year, it is mentioned as a particular proof of the goodness of God, that he would plant it in the dry and arid wilderness, where no verdure is wont to meet the eye of the traveller. We, who have always been accustomed to see rich forests constantly present in our landscapes, can scarcely measure all the preciousness of the promise recorded in these verses.

BRAMBLE.*

“The word which, in Jotham’s remarkable parable recorded in the ninth of Judges, is translated bramble, is said to be the same which is elsewhere translated ‘thorn,’ in Ps. lviii. 9. It seems most probable that as Jotham introduces his allegory by saying, ‘The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king,’ some thorny

* Judges ix. 8-22 ; Isaiah xxxiv. 13 ; Luke vi. 44.

tree was intended, and not the low bramble, which never exceeds a few feet in height.

“Our Lord, however, expressly calls the plant he alludes to a bramble bush, and I find from the report of Dr. Clarke in his travels, that a species of the rubus or bramble bush, is a very common and annoying weed in Palestine. Our dewberry and blackberry belong to the same genus, and we know by experience that they are not only a great nuisance to the traveller as he roams through the fields, but are also destructive to the crops of the farmer ; so that their presence is always deprecated.”

CHAPTER VI.

CAMPHIRE, CANE, CASSIA, AND CINNAMON.

My beloved is unto me as a cluster of *camphire* in the vineyards of Engedi.—*Canticles* i. 14.

Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits ; *camphire* with spikenard.—*Canticles* iv. 13.

“I am very desirous, Mamma, to hear the account of the camphire tree,” said Mary, when they assembled on the following evening. “At one of the exhibitions of the Horticultural Society you pointed out to our notice the tree from which you said the gum camphor was obtained, and I think it resembled our laurel or *kalmia* in its foliage.”

“You were right, my dear,” said her mother, “in thinking that the plant to which I called your attention on that occasion bore a resemblance to our *kalmia* ; but I must inform you that the camphor tree and the *camphire* plant are two very different things. The camphire or cypress, as it is rendered by some translators, is now generally considered to be the same as the al-henna or henna plant, and the reasons for this opinion are very satisfactory. It is a native of the northern part of Africa, Arabia, Persia, and the East Indies, and grows generally in moist situations. In its external appearance it is said strongly to resemble our privet, and was classed formerly by botanists in the same genus. But Lin-





CAMPHIRE OR ALHENNA.—Plate 4.

A, Stem of flowers. B, Flower natural size. C, Bough with berr'es. D, Seed natural size. E, Leaf of natural size.

næus detected certain peculiarities in its seed vessels, and made a distinct genus of it, to which he gave the name of lawsonia, and that species which is supposed to be alluded to by Solomon he called the lawsonia inermis. I will show you a representation of the camphire or al-henna, taken from a painting of it by the traveller Sonnini, and a plate of which is given in the work of Calmet."

Mrs. Howard now drew from her portfolio this painting,* and called upon her children to examine it.

"The letter A," she said, "marked a stem of flowers, B a single flower, C a bough with berries on it, D one seed of the natural size, and E a leaf of the natural size.

"Sonnini," said Mrs. Howard, "describes the henna or camphire as being a tall shrub, which is endlessly multiplied in Egypt. 'The leaves,' he continues, 'are of a lengthened oval form, growing opposite to each other, and of a faint green color. The flowers grow at the extremity of the branches, in long and tufted bunches: the smaller branches which support the flowers are red in color, and grow opposite to each other: the corolla † is formed of four petals curling up, which are of a light yellow color. Between each two petals are two white stamina ‡ with yellow summits. The fruit or berry is a green seed vessel previous to its coming to maturity, but it assumes a red tint as it ripens, and at

* Plate 4.

† See plate 2, figure 2.

‡ See plate 2, figure 3.

length becomes brown when it is dried: it is divided into four compartments, in which are enclosed the triangular brown seeds. The bark of the stem and branches is of a deep gray, and the wood is internally of a yellow color. In truth, this is one of the most grateful plants, both to the sight and smell. The gently deep color of the bark, the light green of the foliage, the softened mixture of white and yellow with which the flowers, collected into long clusters like the lilach, are colored, and the red tint of the flower branches, form a most agreeable combination. These flowers, whose shades are so delicate, diffuse around the sweetest odor, and embalm the gardens and apartments which they embellish. The henna grows in great quantities in the vicinity of Rosetta, and constitutes one of the most beautiful ornaments of the gardens which surround that city. Its root penetrates to a great depth, and with the utmost ease swells to a large size, in a soft, rich soil, mixed with sand. This shrub grows, of course, more vigorously there than elsewhere, but it is found in all the cultivated districts of Egypt. It is with the greenish powder formed of the dried leaves of the henna that the Eastern ladies dye their nails. This henna for dying is prepared chiefly in the Saïd, from whence it is distributed over all the cities of Egypt. The markets are constantly supplied with it, as a commodity of habitual and indispensable use. They dilute it in water, and rub the soft paste which is thus formed on the parts which they mean to color: they are then wrapped up in linen, and at the end of

two or three hours the orange hue is strongly impressed on them.

“ ‘It would appear that the custom of dying the nails was known to the ancient Egyptians, for those of the mummies are mostly of a reddish hue. These marks, which were first reddened, become a shining black by rubbing them with a composition of sal ammoniac, lime, and honey.’ ” *

When Mrs. Howard had concluded reading this full description of the henna, her daughters observed that they had a distinct recollection of Dr. Clarke, in his travels in the East, mentioning the custom of dying the nails as being prevalent among the ladies of Cyprus ; but they remarked at the same time that they had no idea that the plant which was used was the camphire of the Bible.

“ You have, dear Mother,” said Mary, “ made us fully acquainted with this beautiful shrub, will you be so kind as to inform us in what respect it differs from the camphor tree which you pointed out to our notice ? ”

“ This I will do with pleasure,” replied her mother, “ since it always affords me gratification to satisfy a laudable curiosity ; and as the names of the two plants have been confounded by you, I am particularly desirous to give you a correct idea of each of them. ‘ The *camphor tree*, or *laurus camphora*, is a native of the islands of Borneo, Java, and Japan ; it also grows in China. It is, when in maturity, of

* Sonnini's Travels.

considerable height, and much branched, the leaves are lanceolate,* with nerves† of a pale yellowish green on the upper side, and bluish green beneath. The flowers are small and white, and stand on stalks which proceed from the junction of the leaves and branches. Camphor is found in every part of the tree: in the fibres and veins of the wood, in the crevices and knots; in the pith and in the roots, which afford much the greatest quantity. Camphor is also obtained from other plants by distillation: among these are the thyme, rosemary, sage, and some others.’” ‡

CANE.

Thou hast brought me no sweet *cane* with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices; but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.—*Isa.* xliii. 24.

To what purpose cometh these to me, incense from Sheba, and the sweet *cane* from a far country?—*Jer.* vi. 20.

“The cane which is mentioned in these verses, my dear children,” said Mrs. Howard, “is the same plant with that spoken of in Exodus xxx. 23, as the sweet calamus, and which is enumerated by the Lord as one of the ingredients to be used in compounding the ‘holy anointing oil.’ The genus calamus consists of many species. one of these you have seen frequently used as a light walking cane or riding whip, under the name of rattan. Another variety grows to an enormous height, and is called the cable

* See frontispiece, figure 1.

† See frontispiece, figure 2, AA:

‡ *Encyclopedia Americana.*

rattan ; it is used in some parts of the East for ship cable, and also as ropes with which to tame and fasten the wild elephant : in India it is also used for securing the boards of the houses together instead of nails. One of the smaller species of the cane you see often used in millinery : it is a native of Malacca and other parts of the East Indies, and is found by the sides of the rivers. ‘The *calamus aromaticus* is the “sweet calamus” of Moses, and the “sweet cane” of Isaiah and Jeremiah. It has a knotty root which is reddish without and white within, and puts forth long and narrow leaves ; this species, like all of those belonging to this genus, has a stem which is perennial, quite simple or unbranched ; it is long, round, and without prickles : it is also solid and jointed.’

“The cane is said ‘to form a link between the palms and the family of grasses, or gramineous plants, having the flower of the former, but the stem of the latter.’ The true sweet-scented cane comes from India. It was well known to the ancients, though not much used in modern times. Pliny gives directions for choosing it, and speaks of it as a native of Arabia, Syria, and India. It grows in marshes which are dry during the summer.”*

“The *calamus* is also supposed to be the same with Ezekiel’s ‘measuring reed,’ † and also with St. John’s reed, which was like a rod. ‡

“The *calamus scriptorius* was a kind of reed which

* Calmet:

† Ezekiel xl. 3.

‡ Revelations xi. 1.

answered the purpose of a pen, and with which the ancients wrote on the papyrus. By turning to 2 Maccabees, you will find it mentioned that the writers employed in making a list of the Jews in Egypt produced their reeds on the occasion in quite a worn-out condition."

CASSIA.

The LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Take thou also unto thee principal spices, of pure myrrh five hundred shekels, and of sweet cinnamon half so much, even two hundred and fifty shekels, and of sweet calamus two hundred and fifty shekels, and of cassia five hundred shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, and of oil olive a hin : and thou shalt make it an oil of holy ointment, and thou shalt anoint the tabernacle of the congregation therewith, and the ark of the testimony. This shall be a holy anointing oil unto me throughout your generations.—*Exod. xxx. 22-31.*

"We have had occasion," observed Mrs. Howard, "to speak of one ingredient in the 'holy anointing oil' which Moses was directed to make for the service of the sanctuary; we will now examine some of the other articles which served to form that sacred perfume. David also speaks of it in Psalm xlv. 8, when he says, 'All thy garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia.'"

"When you were reading over the different materials which were used in making the sacred oil, I observed, Mamma," said Mary, "that you mentioned both the cassia and the cinnamon as if they were two different things, while we are accustomed to apply the two names indiscriminately to the same article."

“There is, however, a difference between the cassia and the cinnamon, and I will convince you of it by reading an account of them both.

“The wild cinnamon or cassia is the bark of a tree called the *laurus cassia*, which grows in the East Indies and in China, and which is distinguished by having lanceolate leaves,* each with three nerves or veins.† The bark was well known to the ancients, and esteemed by them; but since the use of cinnamon has been generally adopted, the cassia bark has fallen into disrepute on account of its inferiority. It is thicker and coarser than cinnamon, of a weaker quality, and abounds more with a mucilaginous matter. For many purposes cassia is used, from being much less expensive, particularly in the preparation of what is called the oil of cinnamon.”‡

C I N N A M O N .

And of sweet cinnamon half so much.—*Exod.* xxx. 23.

“This article forms the under bark of the *laurus cinnamomum*, which tree is chiefly found in the island of Ceylon, but grows also in Malabar and in other parts of the East Indies. It attains the height of twenty or thirty feet; its leaves are oval, and each from four to six inches in length, and marked with three principal nerves. The flowers stand on slender footstalks, and are of a pale yellow color; and the fruit is shaped somewhat like an acorn. There are two

* See frontispiece, figure 1.

† See frontispiece, figure 2, AAA.

‡ *Encyclopedia Americana*.

principal seasons of the year in which the Ceylonese enter their woods for the purpose of barking the cinnamon trees. The first of these commences in April, and the last in November. In this operation the branches of three years' growth are cut down, and the outer and thin covering of the bark is scraped away. The twigs are then ripped up lengthwise with a knife, and the bark is gradually loosened until it can be taken off entirely. It is then cut into slices, which, on being exposed to the sun, curl up in drying. The smaller pieces, or quills, as they are called, are inserted into the larger ones, and these are afterward tied up in bundles for exportation.

"From the roots of the old trees numerous offsets shoot up, and these are cut down when they have attained the height of ten feet. When they have reached this height they are generally about the thickness of a common walkingstick, and the cinnamon which they yield when barked is considered the finest in quality of any that can be procured. In the year 1782, a French ship bound from the isle of Bourbon to St. Domingo, which had on board, among various oriental productions, a fine cinnamon tree, was captured by an English vessel commanded by Admiral Rodney: he carried the trees to Jamaica, and from this parent stock different parts of the island were afterward supplied.

"In Ceylon the cinnamon trees are said to be so common that they are used for fuel and other domestic purposes." *

* Encyclopedia Americana.

When Mrs. Howard closed the volume from which she had read the above extract, Mary remarked, "that she had noticed the name of *laurus* being applied by her mother, not only to the cinnamon and cassia, but also to the camphor tree."

"They all, my dear," replied her mother, "belong to the same genus, which includes, besides those plants already named, several other valuable species which are very unlike in some respects; among these are the *laurus sassafras*, or sassafras tree, and the *laurus caustica*, which produces a sap that nearly approaches that of the machineel tree in its poisonous properties. I ought not to omit mentioning, before we close the labors of the evening, one remarkable fact with regard to the cinnamon tree, and it is this, that while the bark of the tree is so delightfully fragrant, the odor which arises from the flowers is highly offensive. When I have an opportunity," continued Mrs. Howard, "I shall give you a very interesting account to read of the cinnamon plantations of Ceylon, in the journal of the lamented Bishop Heber. It is said that the spicy character of the cinnamon is likewise observable in the leaves, the fruit, and the root of the trees, which all yield an oil of considerable value. This is particularly fragrant and thick in its consistence, when obtained from the fruit, and in Ceylon, in former times, the oil thus furnished was made into candles for the sole use of the king."

CHAPTER VII.

CEDAR,* CYPRESS, CUMMIN, CITRON, ORANGE,
LEMON, AND CORIANDER.

And Solomon spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall. — 1 *Kings* iv. 33.

The righteous shall grow like a cedar.—*Ps.* xcii. 12.

The cedars of Lebanon which God hath planted—*Ps.* civ. 16.

“THE subject which will first engage our attention this evening, my beloved children,” said Mrs. Howard, “is to me peculiarly interesting, not only from the numerous instances in which the cedar tree is mentioned in Scripture, and the various sacred purposes to which it was applied in the Jewish rites and in the construction of the tabernacle, but especially because the Prophet Ezekiel employs it as a beautiful symbol of our blessed Redeemer. He who was to be ‘the desire of all nations,’ ‘the hope of all the ends of the earth,’ ‘the LORD, our strength and righteousness.’ Let us then consider the cedar as an emblem of him, and the subject will not fail to be useful, and I hope interesting; since it will testify of one who should never be long absent from our thoughts, and to whom we ought to turn with joy and thankfulness during every hour of our lives.

* Psalm cxlviii. 9; Isaiah xii. 19; Ezekiel xvii. 3, 22, 23.

“The Prophet Ezekiel, in the seventeenth chapter of his prophecy, is represented as putting forth a riddle ‘for the house of Israel;’ under which figure of speech he represents the conqueror Nebuchadnezzar as advancing with rapid and warlike steps toward Jerusalem on his work of devastation, and from thence carrying its monarch a captive to Babylon. In this allegory, the mighty conqueror is described as ‘a great eagle, with great wings, long wings, and full of feathers, coming unto Lebanon, and taking the highest branch of cedar; cropping off the top of his young twigs, and carrying it into the city of merchants’ or Babylon. In the subsequent part of the chapter, he makes a transition to the Messiah, and predicts the security, increasing prosperity, and ultimate universality of his kingdom, under the figure of the same favorite tree. ‘Thus saith the LORD GOD, I will also take of the highest branch of the cedar, and will set it: I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one, and I will plant it upon a high mountain and eminent. In the mountain of the house of Israel will I plant it: and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar: and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell.’”

“This is, indeed,” said Harriet, “a beautiful representation of the cedar; and oh, dear Mother, I trust that I may one day be in the number of those fowls who may be allowed to dwell in the shadow of that blessed cedar.”

"God grant, my love," said her mother with emotion, "that both the parent bird and her tender nurslings may be found securely sheltered there in the great day when God will arise to judge the earth. But I think my Mary has something also to say on this subject, judging from her countenance."

Mary replied, "I love, Mamma, to think of the cedar under the figure in which it was used in the cleansing of the leper; for, by the blessing of God on your instructions, I have learned to feel that my heart is diseased with the leprosy of sin; and when I find myself, in spite of all my prayers and strivings, continually beset by sinful thoughts, if not guilty of sinful words, it is so delightful to think of that dear Saviour who is standing ever ready to sprinkle us with his precious blood, in the same manner as the priest did the poor lepers, when he sprinkled them with the cedar branch dipped in blood."

The heart of Mrs. Howard overflowed with gratitude to God as she marked the work of divine grace in the hearts of her children, thus leading them to Him who alone can justify the sinner. This was the subject which this Christian mother had most at heart: for this she prayed with that holy fervor which is inspired by maternal love; for this she labored; and for this she strove to be enabled to act in such a manner as to adorn the doctrine of God her Saviour in all things.

She now inquired of Harriet if she remembered the spot which is so particularly noted in Scripture

as the one from which king Solomon obtained such vast supplies of cedar trees.

"Yes, dear Mother," said Harriet, "it is said in the 1st Kings, fifth chapter, that when Solomon determined to build a temple to God in Jerusalem, he sent messengers to Hiram, king of Tyre, with a request to him that he would command his servants to hew him cedar trees out of Lebanon. And Hiram declared that 'his servants should bring them down from Lebanon unto the sea: and that he would convey them by sea in floats to the place' that Solomon should appoint. It is afterward said, 'So Hiram gave Solomon cedar trees according to all his desire.'"

"Do you recollect the extraordinary number of workmen which Solomon employed as hewers of cedar in the forests of Lebanon?"

"Yes, Mamma," answered Mary, "fourscore thousand are said to have been employed, which proves that the cedar must have been very abundant in that region."

"The mountains of Lebanon," said Mrs. Howard, "appear never to have recovered from this universal sweep made by Solomon. For the last few centuries cedars have been discovered scattered sparingly over these lofty acclivities, which must have been once thickly covered with their dense foliage. I will give you a very interesting account of a small forest of the ancient cedars of Lebanon, which has been visited from century to century by travellers, and the trees of which have even been thought by some to

have been contemporaries with those which were felled by the orders of Hiram. The notice of this spot I have taken from the *Christian Keepsake* of this year, and it is as follows: 'This cedar forest, which is about a mile in circumference, is situated in a semicircular hollow near the base of one of the loftiest summits of this chain of mountains, but in so elevated a situation, that even in April they are imbedded in snow. They are half an hour out of the shortest route from Tripoli to Balbec, which is impassable in the winter. To their sheltered and secluded situation, these ancient trees perhaps owe, in the first instance, their escape from the axe. Latterly they have been guarded by other circumstances. "They never fell them to make boards," was the remark of Dandini, who visited them in the year 1600; an intimation of the fate which, but for the superstitious veneration of the natives, would have befallen them.

"Bellonius, who visited them fifty years before, found twenty-eight of the largest trees. Maundrell, in 1696, could only reckon up sixteen: this accurate traveller measured one of the largest, and found it twelve yards six inches in girth, and yet it was sound: it was thirty-seven yards in the spread of the boughs. At about six yards from the ground it was divided into five limbs, each of which was equal to a great tree. Burckhardt, in 1810, counted eleven or twelve only of the oldest trees, about fifty of the middle size, and more than three hundred smaller, young ones. The trunks of the oldest trees, he says,





ANCIENT CEDAR OF LEBANON.—Plate 5.

seemed quite dead. Dr. Richardson, in 1818, found them reduced to seven. He measured one, not the largest, which was thirty-two feet in circumference. Lamartine, in 1832, speaks of seven remaining, but whether from report or his own observation, is questionable, as the snow prevented his reaching them.

“ ‘This noble tree (*cedrus Libani*) referred to in Scripture, was much valued by the ancients, on account of its reputed incorruptibility, the aromatic smell of the wood repelling worms, and its resin preserving it against the weather. The cedar of Lebanon was distinguished by its towering height and spreading branches. It is taller than the pine, which the younger trees resemble: it rises from sixty to eighty, and even one hundred feet. Dr. Richardson describes these trees as “large, tall, and beautiful, the most picturesque productions of the vegetable world that he had ever seen. The oldest are large and massy, rearing their heads to an enormous height, and spreading their branches afar. This is the case with those which grow at a sufficient distance from each other, but in some instances three or four have grown up together so close as to unite and form one trunk of enormous bulk.”

“ ‘Pococke says, “The great cedars, at some distance look like very large spreading oaks: the bodies of the trees are short, dividing at bottom into three or four, some of which growing up together for about ten feet, appear something like those gothic columns which seem to be composed of several pillars.

Higher up they begin to spread horizontally. The wood does not differ from white deal, nor does it appear to be harder. It has a fine smell, but is not so fragrant as the juniper of America, and it also falls short of it in beauty.” ” ” *

CYPRESS.

He taketh the cypress and the oak.—*Isa.* xliv. 14.

“The cypress,” said Mrs. Howard, “is rarely mentioned in Scripture, and some commentators think the same tree is intended in those instances as in other places which are rendered fir trees. But I am inclined to think that the sacred historian does allude to both of these forest trees; more particularly as modern travellers describe the cypress as distinct from the cedar, and growing also upon the mountains of Libanus; but in more elevated situations than the latter, and nearer the limits of vegetation. According to Pliny this tree grew upon the lofty summits of Mount Ida, amid the region of eternal snow; and some of the mountains of Persia are described as being ‘clothed with cypress.’ Calmet mentions the tree as being very tall and straight, and forming a shade which was considered dangerous by the Romans, from which circumstance it was used in funeral rites. The wood is always green, very heavy, of an agreeable smell, and never rots, nor is liable to be eaten by worms. In Ecclesiasticus the

* Christian Keepsake.

wise man observes, 'I was exalted like a cedar in Lebanon, and as a cypress upon the mountains of Hermon.' "

The tree which is known by this name as a native of this country belongs to the same genus *cupressus* with our white cedar: in our southern States it is found growing in immense quantities, forming dark, dense swamps, which are dreaded by the traveller as injurious to health.

"We have been for a long time engaged," continued Mrs. Howard, "under the lofty and ancient cedars of Lebanon; let us stoop to examine a very different and far more humble vegetable production, I mean that plant of which the proud and bigoted Pharisees paid tithes so scrupulously in conjunction with the mint and anise."

CUMMIN.

Wo unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.—*Matt. xxiii. 23.*

"The only species of the cummin which is known, as far as I am aware of, is that called the *cuminum cyminum*. The stem is low, not more than from six to twelve inches in height: the leaves are divided into long narrow segments, and are of a deep green. The flowers are produced in an umbel* at the ex-

* See plate 2, figure 4

tremity of the branches : the blossom is purplish, or of a pale blue color, with rays * of leaves : the seeds are flat on one side, on the other round, and the latter side is marked with streaks, and has a few small bristles over it. The seed is kept in many of our druggist shops, and though the flavor is unpleasant, it is said to possess medicinal virtues.

“ The cummin flowers in June and July, and is a native of Egypt, but is cultivated also in the south of Europe and in Asia Minor.”

CITRON.

As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons : I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.—*Canticles* ii. 3.

A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.—*Prov.* xxv. 11.

The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth ; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered : because joy is withered away from the sons of men.—*Joel* i. 12.

“ There has been considerable discussion on these passages. Some writers suppose the quince is the fruit designated ; others the apple ; while others still, and they the larger number, decide that the citron is the tree intended. With regard to the claim of the apple tree to be that spoken of by Solomon, I must remark that this tree is exceedingly rare in the East, and its fruit is of a very indifferent quality neither does its appearance present any

* See plate 2, figure 6.

resemblance to golden ornaments; all these reasons lead me to think it most probable that the citron is the most correct translation of that Hebrew word which, in our English Bible, is rendered apple. Josephus also mentions, that, in the celebration of one of the Jewish feasts, branches of the pome citron were carried in the hands of some of the priests. We know also, that this tree was formerly cultivated in abundance in Palestine; and at the present day plantations of citron, oranges, and lemons, meet the eye of the traveller through the Holy Land in all directions.

“The genus citrus includes the different species of lemon, orange, citron, shaddock, and lime; and therefore we will consider them all at this time.

“The trees of this genus are never very large, and some species are ranked as shrubs. The leaves are uniformly evergreen, oval, and entire, or without lobes. The blossom, or corolla, consists of five leaves, which are oblong, flat, and spreading; they are white in color, or with a slight purplish tinge, and are highly fragrant. The citron, lemon, and lime, have been thought by some to be only varieties of one species, the *citrus medica*, from the circumstance of the fruit of all these three trees being formed alike, and likewise because their footstalks, or leaf stalks, are all naked,* while those of the orange and shaddock are winged.† The citron is oblong, with a very thick rind; the lemon oblong,

* See frontispiece, figure 1.

† See frontispiece, figure 2, B.

with a small protuberance at the end; while the lime is smooth at the end, with a very thin skin, and in size does not exceed a small egg.

“It is generally thought that the citron was first introduced from Assyria and Media into Greece, from thence brought into the south of Europe, and finally, into the West Indies.

“The citrus aurantium, or orange, is a middle-sized evergreen tree, with a greenish-brown bark. It is a native of India, China, and other countries of Asia. The famous Evelyn, who has been called the father of English forests, remarks, that ‘the first China orange tree that appeared in Europe was sent as a present to the Condè Mellor, then prime minister to the king of Portugal;’ and he afterward says, ‘that of the whole case which came to Lisbon, only this plant escaped destruction; and that was so spoiled and affected by its confinement, as to be spared with difficulty to become the parent of all those flourishing orange trees which have since been cultivated in England.’ Evelyn remarks, that ‘as he had received the account from the son of the Condè himself, he thought it right to record it, as an instance of what human industry could produce in less than half a century.’”

C O R I A N D E R.

And the house of Israel called the name thereof manna : and it was like *coriander* seed, white ; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey.—*Exod.* xvi. 31.

“I have already detained you longer than our usual hour, my dear children,” said Mrs. Howard, “and will therefore give you a very brief description of the coriander.

“The *coriandrum sativum* is an annual plant, and is a native of China and the south of Europe. The stem is a foot, or a foot and a half in height : it is smooth and branched ; the root leaves are large and pinnate ; * the blossoms are white, or reddish white. It flowers in June and July, in corn fields and by road sides : the leaves have a strong disagreeable scent ; the seeds are pleasant to the taste, and are sometimes used in medicine.”

* See frontispiece, figure 5.

CHAPTER VIII.

CORN,* COCKLE, CUCUMBER, CAROB TREE.

And I saw in my dream, and behold, seven ears came up in one stalk, full and good: and behold, seven ears, withered, thin, and blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them: and the thin ears devoured the seven good ears.—*Gen.* xli. 22–24.

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the first-fruits of your harvest unto the priest; and he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. And ye shall offer that day, when ye wave the sheaf, a he-lamb without blemish of the first year, for a burnt-offering unto the LORD. And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.—*Levit.* xxiii. 9–12, 14.

“THE term corn,” said Mrs. Howard, “appears to be used in Scripture in a general sense, for all the different kinds of grain. The Jews and Egyptians not only made use of the wheat bread, but also of that formed from the barley and millet; the latter constituted the food of the poorer classes only, as we learn by turning to Ezekiel iv. 9. You will there find that when the prophet was commanded to lie upon his bed for the space of three hundred and

* Psalm lxx. 9; Mark iv. 28; John xii. 24.

ninety days, as a sign to the house of Israel, a part of that trial of faith enjoined upon him, appears to have consisted in his being required to live during that time on a coarse and unpalatable bread, formed of 'wheat, barley, beans, lentiles, and millet.' And here I must call upon you, my dear children, to notice, admire, and strive to imitate that spirit of filial and unhesitating submission to the commands of God, which this holy prophet exhibited on this occasion. It should call a blush on our cheeks to look at him under this severe discipline. Let us endeavor to realize what it was; to make the case our own. His LORD commanded him, while in his usual health, to retreat to his bed for three hundred and ninety days, and there to lie in one position, on his left side; after that time had elapsed, he was ordered to turn on his right side, and continue there for forty days: during this long and tedious confinement, he was, besides, to be 'a spectacle' to all of the house of Israel who chose to visit him; and he had probably to endure many a taunt and much scorn from those who were not aware of his motives; and probably some remonstrances from his friends, who might have thought he was taking a mistaken view of his duty. During all this time his nourishment, which consisted of this coarse unsavory bread, was to be weighed out to him in scanty measure, and the small portion of water which was allowed him for drink was to be measured likewise. Let us look at this servant of God under these trying circumstances. He hesitated not, he inquired not the

why and the wherefore of his LORD's commands, but immediately, cheerfully, *obeyed* them. Let us pray, my beloved children, that we may be enabled to imitate him, in holy obedience to the far lighter and less burdensome yoke of our Redeemer.

"Professor Forskall, during his visit to the East, found several kinds of grain growing in Egypt and Syria, which he describes,—First, wheat of three different kinds; second, oats of three sorts, one of which grew in the desert places about Cairo; third, barley; and fourth, millet.

"There is a species of Egyptian bread-corn, called by the natives the durra, which is classed by some writers with barley, by others with millet. The traveller Niebuhr says, 'The durra is a kind of millet made into bread with camel's milk, oil, and butter, and is the most common food which is eaten by the Arabs. I found it so disagreeable, that I would have preferred plain barley bread. The Arabs procure three crops of it every year. The first crop is regularly sown, and the other two crops spring from the seed which was shed. Birds of various kinds are so greedy of the durra when ripe, that the husbandmen cannot, without close watching, keep them away.'"

"I must inquire, Mamma," said Mary, "what kind of corn that is supposed to have been which Pharaoh saw in his dream, bearing seven ears? As nothing is said in the Bible of its being an extraordinary fact for one stalk of corn to produce seven ears, I should suppose there must have been some





SPECIES OF EGYPTIAN WHEAT.—Plate 6.

species peculiar to Egypt, which bore a number of heads. You know that our wheat and rye have only one ear to each stalk, and I believe the Indian corn seldom exceeds two to each stalk."

"I am so happy, my dear," replied her mother, "as to be able to relieve your perplexity by showing you a painting of a species of Egyptian wheat which I have copied from Calmet.* Some grains of this wheat were sent to England from Egypt in 1797, and there planted, and it is the representation of one of the ears thus produced that I shall show you."

Mrs. Howard now exhibited this painting to her daughters, and then remarked, "I have not copied this with entire precision as to the formation of each grain, but it will give you a general idea of the whole ear. You will observe that I have painted some of these ears of a much darker color than others, and this fact I wish you to remark particularly. This was the copy of the stalk which was produced in England, and which not being the native soil of the grain, it is supposed was the reason why several of the ears did not fill well. Those parts which produced the grain in perfection, are such as I have shaded darkly on my painting, while those which did not fill I have shaded lightly. Calmet remarks, 'By a little indulgence of imagination, we can fancy that a thin blasted ear, not unlike the dimensions of the degenerate English specimen, was such a plant as Pharaoh saw in his dream; while

* See plate 6.

the full ear, which was significant of plenty, surpassed the size of the plant represented in our plate.' ”

“Indeed, Mamma,” replied Mary, “you have quite relieved my perplexity of mind on this subject, by showing us this plate and giving us this explanation; and hereafter I shall always imagine Pharaoh’s blasted ear to have been such as you have now described.”

“We have all felt,” said Mrs. Howard, “too sensibly the importance of grain of various kinds as articles of nourishment, not to understand why the possession of abundance of corn should have been so frequently held out by God as a promise to his obedient children, and the withholding of it as a curse for transgressions. Can you, Harriet, recollect any texts exemplifying the gift of corn as a promised blessing?”

“I think I can turn to them, Mamma.”

She then opened her Bible, and read the following passages. The first forms part of Isaac’s blessing pronounced over the head of Jacob. ‘Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, plenty of corn and wine.’* The second is in Deuteronomy vii. 13, where God promised, if the Israelites continued obedient, to ‘bless the fruit of the land, the corn,’ &c., &c. And another passage of the same kind is to be found in Deuteronomy

* Genesis xxvii. 28.

xxxiii. 28, where the aged Moses is delivering his parting blessing on his beloved people."

"I wish you, my dear children," observed Mrs. Howard, "to turn to the twenty-third chapter of Leviticus, the same which you have noted down on your list; for it is one on which I wish to make a few remarks. This, you observe, is a description of the wave-offering which the children of Israel were to bring to the sanctuary when they had completed their harvest for the year. Before it was presented they were forbidden to eat either parched corn, or green ears, or the bread made of the grain. Now what I wish particularly to call your attention to is, the beautiful resemblance which is here presented of our blessed Redeemer. But in order to understand it fully, we must call in the aid of other parts of Scripture.

"Now turn to the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, and read from the twenty-fourth to the thirty-first verse, and in a subsequent part of the chapter, from the thirty-sixth to the forty-fourth verse, our Saviour's explanation of the parable of the tares of the field. Here you find the world described as a great 'field;' the good seed sown in it are the children of the 'kingdom;' 'the harvest is the end of the world;' and 'the reapers are the angels.' Then again, look at the fifteenth chapter of 1st Corinthians, and here again mankind is represented under the figure of wheat; and the glorious doctrine of the resurrection is explained by a reference to the change which

takes place in the grain after it has been sown in the ground : it is there buried in the earth, and while it is shut out from mortal eyes, a curious and miraculous change takes place ; the process of corruption ensues, and then, and observe, not *until then*, does the wheat spring up, and rise to new life, and fresh and increasing beauty. ‘ So also,’ says the apostle, ‘ is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption ; it is raised in incorruption : it is sown in dishonor ; it is raised in glory : it is sown in weakness ; it is raised in power : it is sown a natural body ; it is raised a spiritual body.’ We have now, my dear children, considered the whole human race under this figure : we have viewed ourselves first as planted in ‘ the field, the world.’ We will suppose that the harvest is over, that the heavenly husbandmen have deposited the grain they have reaped ; and here we will suppose it is fast locked, the word of God says thus it must remain, ‘ No green ears, or parched corn, shall be used or drawn forth, until the sheaf of the wave-offering has been presented in the sanctuary.’ And where shall we find that precious sheaf ? Must we remain shut up in darkness for ever ; without God, and without hope ? No, blessed be God, on that awful day, when the Son of God suffered for our sins, ‘ The burnt-offering of a lamb without blemish, and the sheaf of the first-fruits, was presented before the throne of God for us :’ when that blessed Redeemer ascended in his risen and glorified body, he carried that hallowed sheaf into the holy of holies for us : the sacrifice was most graciously

accepted, the prison doors were loosened; JESUS became the first-fruits of them that slept in him; and now, with this blessed assurance to sustain us, we commit 'ashes to ashes, dust to dust, in sure and certain hope of a blessed resurrection' to every believer in CHRIST. I have detained you longer than I intended, my beloved children, by explaining my views on this subject, but I do not regret it. Our Church has made use of this most appropriate and consolatory chapter to form part of her exquisitely-beautiful funeral service, and it is one which is most delightful to the afflicted to rest on, when in anguish of heart, they follow a beloved object to their last home. God grant, my children," said this tender mother, with deep solemnity of feeling, "that we may *all*, through the grave and gate of death, pass to a joyful resurrection!

"There is still another beautiful passage of the New Testament in which our LORD taught his disciples a very important doctrine of his holy religion, by a figurative allusion to our present subject. Can either of you recollect it?"

"I remember, Mamma," answered Mary, "a part of the fourth chapter of St. Mark, in which our Saviour compares the work of divine grace, in changing the heart, to 'a man casting seed into the ground; who should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.'"

“It was this which I was alluding to, and I will give you to read, on some occasion, the letters on this subject which were written by the excellent Newton. We should pray continually, my dear girls, that we ‘may be made God’s children by adoption:’ ‘that we may be made his for ever, and daily increase in his holy Spirit more and more, until we come to his everlasting kingdom.’

“We will pass from the subject of corn to examine a humble weed which is noticed in Scripture, and which is found growing in the fields of grain of our own and other countries.”

THE COCKLE.

Let thistles grow instead of wheat, and cockle instead of barley.
—*Job xxxi. 40.*

“The cockle, or *agrostemma*, is a plant which you have often gathered in your walk: it grows from twelve to eighteen inches in height, has a light dull green stalk and leaves; these are all covered with a woolly or downy substance. The flower consists of five petals, and is of a beautiful lilach color.”

CUCUMBERS.*

“When the Israelites ungratefully and sinfully reproached Moses at Taberah, they declared, ‘We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt: the cucumbers, melons, and leeks, and garlic; but now our soul is dried away.’

* Numbers xi. 5; Isaiah i. 8.

“Calmet remarks on this subject, ‘Interpreters are pretty well agreed on the import of the word rendered cucumber in our Bible : it is, they say, *melons* : these are still esteemed delicacies in Egypt, and still form an important part of the food of the Egyptians during the hot months.’ Professor Forskall found several kinds of cucumbers in Cairo and its vicinity. One species he describes, which he says is called *coloquintida* by the natives. It grows in the desert, buds and spreads itself during the season, when the nights are cool, which is after the inundation, and when the continuance of slight rains in the mountains produce some water in the plains. One part of the leaves is eaten by the gazelle, the remainder is devoured by drought : the fruit alone remains till the next year, when the seed sows itself, and continues this kind of vegetation, which is characteristic of the country.’

“There is another variety, which the Arabs call *adjur*. The stalks of this are tapering, and have rough bristles ; the leaves are lobed * and rough on both sides ; the flowers are yellow ; the fruit while young is rough, but is smooth when ripe, and is oval diminishing toward each end. It is eatable in its raw state, and forms a common article of food in Egypt.

“I must not,” continued Mrs. Howard, “forget to allude to that expression of Isaiah in which he compares Judea, when desolated for her sins, to ‘a

* See frontispiece, figure 3.

lodge in a garden of cucumbers.' In explanation of this figure, I must inform you that several travellers in the countries of the East mention a custom that still prevails in them, of putting up slight cottages in their vineyards and melon grounds, for the temporary accommodation of the person who is charged with the cultivation of the ground, in order to secure them from being robbed. After the fruit was removed, the lodge being no longer necessary, it would, of course, become 'desolate.'

"There is a tree which I shall notice now," said Mrs. Howard, "on account of the attention it has attracted in modern times: the reason of this notoriety is, that many persons have entertained the idea that it was the tree on which John the Baptist subsisted during his residence in the wilderness, when the evangelists say he lived 'on *locusts* and wild honey.' These locusts they suppose were the pods of the tree I am going to describe, and which is called the *carob tree*. This tree grows in warm situations: it rises very high on a thick trunk, and spreads out strong and solid branches. The leaves are somewhat round, three inches or more broad, and somewhat longer than broad. The flowers are milk white. The fruit is produced in pods longer and thicker than the finger of a man; they are somewhat crooked in shape, and contain a sweet pulpy matter. The tree is common in Calabria, Sicily, Egypt, and Palestine.

"Dr. Clarke, in his travels in Palestine, observes, 'Near the village of Althen grew the largest carob

tree we noticed in our travels. It is by some called St. John's bread, and is the *ceratonia siliqua* of Linnaeus. It was covered with fruit, the pods being green, and had, when we saw it, attained the size of our largest English oaks.' Fisher, in his travels in Spain, says, he 'saw men with long poles knocking down the carob fruit. These carobs are long black husks, containing a brown and sweetish pulp, with which mules and cattle are fed, and which are extremely nourishing.' I must not forget to tell you, before closing my remarks, that these 'husks' are supposed to be the same on which the prodigal son lived when in his state of suffering."

CHAPTER IX.

FIG TREE.*

Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy GOD, to walk in his ways, and to fear him. For the LORD thy GOD bringeth thee into a good land; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and *fig trees*, and pomegranates.—*Deut.* viii. 6-8.

And Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said, Go and see the land what it is: and they brought of the pomegranates and of the *figs*.—*Numbers* xiii. 17, 18, 23.

And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry. And seeing a fig tree afar off, having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves: for the time of figs was not yet. And JESUS answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it. And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.—*Mark* xi. 12-14, 20.

“I THINK, my dear children,” remarked Mrs. Howard, “you will find the subject of our conversation of this evening by no means devoid of interest, as the fig tree comes associated with scenes which are especially calculated to impress the mind of those who attentively ‘search the Scriptures.’”

“In the eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, you will observe Moses appealing to the Israelites, and with

* 1 Samuel xxv. 18; 2 Kings xx. 7; Isaiah xxxviii. 21; Jeremiah viii. 13; Amos vii. 14; Matthew vii. 16; Luke vi. 44; Joel i. 7; Habakkuk iii. 17.

deep pathos calling on them, in God's name, 'to keep the commandments of the LORD their God, to walk in his ways, and to serve him,' from a sense of his great mercies to them; which mercies he enumerates, in order to excite and quicken their gratitude by the review of them: and, among these blessings, Moses instances the richness and fertility of the land of Canaan; a land which, he observed, produces an abundance not only of plain and wholesome food, but also the delicious and refreshing fruits of the fig tree and pomegranate.

"When Moses, agreeably to the commands of God, sent Caleb, Joshua, and their companions, into the promised land, to investigate its capacities for improvement, and its wealth, we are informed, on their return, that among the proofs which they gave of its fertility, 'they brought of its figs.'

"From these, and many other passages of Scripture, we learn that the fig not only constituted an article of luxury, as it does in our own country, but also an essential part of their nourishment: thus you will find, when Abigail went on her errand of propitiation to David, that she took with her two hundred cakes of figs, among her other valuable offerings.

"The genus *ficus*, or fig tree, is a very extensive one, and comprehends more than one hundred species, some of the most remarkable of which I shall notice.

"The *ficus carica*, or common fig, is a native of Asia, Africa, and the south of Europe, and has been cultivated from time immemorial in the countries

which border on the Mediterranean, in all of which it forms an important article of nourishment. The stem rises from fifteen to twenty feet in height, and occasionally measures six feet in circumference. The tree generally throws out numerous long, twisted, and pliant branches, which have a rough gray bark when the trees are young. The wood of the fig tree is porous and spongy; the leaves are lobed,* sometimes with three, and again with five lobes; and these leaves drop at the approach of autumn.

"I must here pause a moment," remarked Mrs. Howard, "and inquire whether either of you can inform me of the appearance of the blossom of the fig?"

The young ladies replied that they were quite ignorant on this point, as they had never seen the fig tree excepting when the fruit was formed.

Their mother smiled. "You were wholly unconscious, then, my dear children, when you were examining the young and tender fig, that within that small green case, a curious phenomenon of the vegetable world was actually concealed.

"You doubtless recollect that upon opening the skin of the fig numerous seeds are to be seen; but you were not aware that when the fig is opened in its green state, a diminutive blossom occupies each spot afterward filled with a seed: instead of one large flower, innumerable small ones are placed inside

See frontispiece, figure 3.

of the fleshy hollow receptacle, which is generally denominated the skin of the fig."

"If this is the mode in which the seeds of the fig are produced," said Mary, "the fruit must be indeed worth examining."

"I must inform you, however," replied Mrs. Howard, "that these small florets have not the appearance of a common blossom, as they are destitute of petals, and only possess the stamens and pointal. The fig tree was common in Palestine in former days, and it still continues to be an important article of produce.

"Dr. Clarke, in his travels through the Holy Land, speaks of meeting in every direction with vineyards of oranges, lemons, vines, and figs.

"I am particularly desirous to speak to you of the withered fig tree noticed in the twenty-first chapter of St. Matthew, and in a still more remarkable manner by St. Mark, in the eleventh chapter of his gospel. This latter passage I shall call upon Mary to read to us." Mary then opened her Bible, and read the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth verses of the eleventh chapter of St. Mark. When she had concluded, her mother observed, "As this passage has excited the cavils of some unbelievers in the Gospel, I think it proper to relate to you the account given of the subject in Calmet, which is calculated to remove the perplexity of the believer in revelation, and to silence the infidel. One of the remarks of a writer of the latter class I shall cite, merely to show its refutation. He thus writes, 'The fig tree is

cursed for not bearing fruit' out of season; this I conceive to be neither rational nor just; for it is said, "When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves: for the time of figs was not yet." Hence it is manifest that he required the tree to produce fruit out of season, which would have been contrary to the intent of its Maker.'

"You observe the aspersions which are here cast upon our LORD's character: he came at the season when figs were not ripened; he unreasonably expected to find them; and finding them not, he cursed the tree.

"I cannot, by any words of my own, so effectually clear up the perplexities resting upon this subject, as by citing some passages from Calmet.

"He first asks permission to paraphrase the verses, and read them thus:—'JESUS, coming early in the morning from Bethany, was hungry: seeing a fig tree from afar, at such a distance that he could only discern its spread of leaves, he went to it, *if perhaps* he might find some figs on it; for it was not yet the usual season for figs to be fit for gathering on fig trees in general: but he found leaves only; and he said, "None shall ever find fruit on thee hereafter." It is inquired, If this was not the season for figs, with what propriety did our LORD curse this barren fig tree? Now, it is from our too common inattention to the natural history of the East, that a just and definitive answer to the inquiry has been hitherto precluded: insomuch that incredulity has boasted of its triumph on occasion of this miracle. Interpret-





A BRANCH OF THE SYCAMORE FIG.—Plate 7.

ers have racked their invention, and misapplied their learning. Some have tried to render the words, "It was not *a year* for figs;" but this the Greek will not bear. But even if it would, to what purpose would be this rendering? Some again have wished to read, "It *was* the season for figs;" but this, too, violates the text, as the time was in March, certainly long enough before the general fig season. Dr. Doddridge thinks, "It was not the season of the early and finest kind of figs;" which ripen considerably later. Moreover, in that case what need would there be of St. Mark's "if perhaps?" since there could have been, in such a case, none of the uncertainty which is implied in the expectation of finding fruit on the tree. Besides, do such valuable kinds of fig trees grow by the wayside? Are they not rather cultivated with care by proprietors? Let us now see how the story will read after we have perused an extract from Norden's travels in Egypt. "I shall remark that they have in Egypt divers sorts of figs; one of which differs particularly from the others: I mean that which the tree bears, known by the name of the *ficus sycamorus*, the Egyptian or sycamore fig tree. This sycamore is of the height of a beech tree, and bears its fruit in a manner quite different from other fig trees: they grow on the trunk itself, which shoots out little sprigs, in the form of grape stalks, at the end of which grow the fruit, close to one another, and almost like bunches of grapes.*"

* See plate 7.

The tree is always green, and bears fruit several times in the year, without observing any regular season for so doing. I have seen some sycamores bearing fruit two months after others. The fruit has the figure and smell of common figs,[†] but is inferior to them in taste, having a disgusting sweetness. The color is yellow, inclining to ochre shaded with flesh color: in the inside it resembles the common fig, excepting that it has a blackish coloring with spots. This sort of tree is common in Egypt, and the poorer class of people for the greater part live on its fruit." This author asserts it was this kind of tree into which Zaccheus climbed to see JESUS, and which St. Luke calls a sycamore. As there is no difficulty in admitting this opinion, for the same kind of tree that grew in the way to Jericho might grow near Jerusalem, let us for the present adopt it; it will follow, as that tree stood by the wayside, so might the fig tree which St. Mark speaks of in the verses we have been examining. If they stood in such a public situation, then I suppose neither of them was private property, so that our LORD, by withering the tree, did not injure any owner: it was not in a garden, nor was it of any kind usually planted against a wall, for such a tree could not have borne the weight of Zaccheus. This tree is "always green," doubtless with leaves; it bears fruit several times in the year, so that a person viewing it almost any time of the year from a dis-

* See plate 8.

tance, cannot determine whether it has fruit on it or not, which circumstance satisfactorily accounts for the "if perhaps" of St. Mark, and the advancing of Jesus toward it, supposing this kind of tree might bear fruit, while it was not yet the usual season for gathering figs from the kind generally cultivated.'"*

"Thank you, dear Mamma," said Harriet, when her mother paused. "How much light this account of the sycamore fig throws upon this passage, which has sometimes perplexed me considerably. I have only one question to ask, and that is, How it is known to have been in March that our Saviour came to the fig tree; for I cannot find any reference to the season of the year in either gospel?"

"The time is ascertained, my dear, I believe, by its being just previous to the passion. I must also remark, that the expression, 'Our Lord cursed the fig tree,' is said to be incorrect; for, 'strictly speaking, it only meant that he commanded it to continue from henceforth in its present state. As thou art now barren, remain barren; no man has eaten fruit of thee hitherto, and let no one in future do so.' In fact, the shrivelling of the leaves was the only alteration which took place in the apparent state of the tree. If you turn to Amos vii. 14, you will find him describing his occupation as being that of 'a gatherer of sycamore fruit.' Calmet remarks that this passage ought to be rendered, 'a dresser of sycamore fruit,' and he then proceeds to state in what this

* Calmet.

dressing consists, by giving an extract from Pococke's travels. 'The dumez of Egypt is called by some Pharaoh's fig: it is the sycamore of the ancients, and is properly a ficus or wild fig. The fruit is small, but like the common fig. At the end of it a sort of water gathers together, and unless the fig is cut, and the water let out, it will not ripen.'

Mrs. Howard now drew from her portfolio a painting of the sycamore, or Egyptian fig, which she had copied from Calmet's work.

"This branch," she observed, as she directed the attention of her children to the plate, "represents a limb of the sycamore.* The leaf of this tree, which you will notice, is not shaped like the common fig, but is round † the fruit, or fig; and the dark line, marks the part which is pared off by the 'dresser of figs.' Hasselquist remarks, 'that when the fruit reaches the size of about an inch in diameter, the inhabitants pare off a part at the centre point, which place then turns black. They say without this paring, the fruit will not come to maturity.'

"Do you recollect, Mary, any particular promise with reference to the fig tree as a place of shelter?"

"Yes, Mamma," she replied, "I do remember one in those texts which we collected with reference to the fig, and I will read it to you. It is in the fourth chapter of Micah, where the prophet is foretelling the happy reign of the Messiah; among other blessings of that time, he says, 'They shall sit every

* See plate 8, figure 2.

† See plate 8, figure 2.



THE SYCAMORE FIG.—Plate 3.



man under his vine, and under his fig tree, and none shall make them afraid.' I have also two other passages marked, in which the same idea occurs. One is in 1 Kings iv. 25, 'And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, all the days of Solomon.' The other is in Zech. iii. 10."

When Mary had finished reading her verses, her mother remarked, "I have called your attention to this part of the subject because I have met with some facts which appear to me to illustrate these texts of Scripture very forcibly. Professor Forskall remarks, that, 'in Arabia, the fig tree and the Indian tamarind are planted to form shades all over the houses.' And Denon, in his travels, observes, 'The shade of the sycamore must always be reckoned in Egypt as a summer apartment, or lodgings for the servants of a party. Great use is made of the shadow of the sycamore in this hot country.'

"You probably are not aware that the celebrated banyan tree of the East Indies also belongs to the family of figs; it is known as the *ficus indica* by botanists. 'This vast tree is entirely smooth, the branches spreading very wide, and bowed down; the lower ones rooting and ash colored: the leaves are oblong, rounded at the base: the fruit is collected into various spots in the branches, globular, and about the size of a hazel nut. The English call it the banyan tree. Mr. Evelyn observes that this tree propagates itself by letting a kind of gummy string fall from its branches, which takes root, and thus the tree spreads

itself over a vast circumference.' Dr. Good, in his Book of Nature, describes 'the largest tree of this kind known to Europeans, which grows on an island in the river Nerbudda, in the Guzerat, in Hindostan, distinguished in honor of a Brahmin of high reputation by the name of Cubbeer Bur. High floods have destroyed many of its incurved stems, yet its principal stems measure two thousand feet in circumference; the number of its larger trunks, each exceeding the bulk of our noblest oaks, amounts to three hundred and fifty, while that of its smaller is more than three thousand; so that seven thousand persons may find ample room to repose under its enormous shade, and may at the same time be richly supplied from the vast abundance of fruit which it yields in its season.' Thus you see, my dear children, one single tree of the fig family may afford to weary travellers, not only refuge from the sultry sun of the East, but food to supply their exhausted bodies. I did not expect," added Mrs. Howard, "that we should have sat so long under our fig tree, but as we have found so much to elucidate Scripture, we will not regret that a whole evening has been devoted to the subject."

CHAPTER X.

FIR TREE,* FLAGS, FLAX, AND FRANKINCENSE.

And Hiram sent to Solomon, saying, I have considered the things which thou sentest to me for : and I will do all thy desire concerning timber of cedar, and concerning timber of fir.—1 *Kings* v. 8.

I will set in the desert the fir tree.—*Isa.* xli. 19.

The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary.—*Isa.* lx. 13.

“WE shall commence the occupation of this evening,” observed Mrs. Howard, “by the consideration of the fir tree which Solomon employed in the building of the temple. Can either of you remember the particular parts of it which are said to have been formed of this wood?”

“Yes, Mamma,” replied Harriet, “it is mentioned in the sixth chapter of 1st *Kings*, that Solomon covered the floor of the house of God with ‘planks of fir;’ and again in 2 *Chron.* iii. 5, that ‘the greater house he ceiled with fir.’”

“I must point out to your notice,” said Mrs. Howard, “a remarkable illustration of a fact mentioned in Scripture with respect to this tree, which has been given by Dr. Burney in his *History of Music*. By turning to 2 *Samuel* vi. 5, you will find the circum-

* Hosea xiv. 8; Zechariah xi. 2.

stance recorded to which I allude: it is there said, that the instruments of music on which ‘David and all the house of Israel played before the Lord, were made of fir wood.’

“Some writers contend that the Hebrew word rendered here *fir wood* ought to have been translated differently; but as a confirmation of its correctness, I will here mention what Dr. Burney says of the fir wood. ‘This species of wood, so soft in its nature, and sonorous in its effects, seems to have been preferred by the ancients as well as the moderns for the construction of their musical instruments, particularly of those parts on which the tone principally depends. The harps, lutes, guitars, harpsichords, and violins, which are in modern use, are constantly made of fir wood.’

“The fir tree belongs to the genus *pinus*, which we shall have occasion to notice more particularly hereafter, and therefore we will pass over it at present. You are familiar with one species of the fir, which forms a beautiful ornament of our lawns and gardens, and which we are accustomed to call the Scotch fir, or balm of Gilead.”

FLAGS.

And when she could no longer hide the child, she took for him an ark of bulrushes; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink.—*Exod.* ii. 3.

Can the flag grow without water?—*Job* viii. 11.

“I am afraid that I can give you but scanty information on this subject, which appears to have perplexed

commentators not a little. All that I can glean of a satisfactory nature is from a brief exposition which Calmet gives of the verse in Job which you have marked down for me. He tells us that Mr. Parkhurst suspects that Hasselquist has described the plant designated in our version of Job as the flag, in his notice of a certain seed which grows along the banks of the Nile. 'It has scarcely any branches, but numerous leaves, which are narrow, smooth, and ribbed, on the upper side: the whole plant is about eleven feet high, and the Egyptians make rope of its leaves. They lay them in water in the same manner that they treat their hemp, and then make good and strong cables of them.'

" 'This account,' continues Calmet, 'induces me to conclude, that in these reeds, which cover the banks of the Nile, we find "the flags" in which Moses was concealed in his ark of bulrushes. The remarkable height to which they attain, and their plenty, lead to the persuasion, that in some thick tuft of them the future prophet of Israel was concealed.' "

"I have always, Mamma," said Harriet, taken the words literally, and supposed these flags resembled the flowers of the same name, which grow so abundantly along the marshy banks of the Delaware. But your account is much more satisfactory, as I have never seen any thing of the flag kind which was large enough to have screened the ark."

FLAX.*

And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch forth thy hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt. And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven, and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground: and the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt. And the flax and the barley was smitten: for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was balled.—*Exod. ix. 22, 23, 31.*

“Flax is a humble vegetable production, but it has been ennobled from the use to which it was appropriated in the Jewish tabernacle. It constituted the material from which was woven ‘the fine-twined linen,’ of which ‘the veil’ and hangings of the tabernacle were formed, and in which the priests were clothed when they ministered in the sacred services of the temple.

“The hallowed and mysterious veil separated the holy of holies from what was called the sanctuary of the Jewish temple, and we are informed by St. Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews, that it was a type of the human nature of our LORD, in which, during his residence on earth, the glories of the divinity were screened from mortal eyes. The veil was, no doubt, regarded with awful reverence by the Jewish worshipper, from the circumstance of its concealing from view the place where God dwelt, in a miraculous manner, between the cherubim over the mercy-seat. No one but the Jewish high-priest was al

* Joshua ii. 6.

lowed to pass this veil, and even he but on one occasion during the year, and then not without sprinkling his path with blood. Let the thought of it, my beloved children, lead us to Him at whose death 'the veil of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom.' We are taught by this miracle that the partition which separated guilty and condemned sinners from the presence of God has been broken down by the Son of God dying for them on the cross, who has thus opened a way for penitent believers, which is sprinkled with his most precious blood, even into heaven, the true 'holy of holies;' through the merits of our blessed Redeemer's death we may all now come, my dear children, even with 'boldness, to the throne of grace, to obtain mercy and find help in every time of need.'

"There is also another thing," observed Mrs. Howard, "of which fine linen is made the emblem by St. John, in the book of Revelations; for in this, he compares to fine linen that pure and spotless robe of righteousness with which the Saviour clothes the believer.

"This favored disciple beheld in his vision 'a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;' who 'cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.' His angelic attendant inquired of the apostle if he knew who those were who were clothed

in 'white robes,' and from whence they came? St. John, conscious of his ignorance, and almost afraid to speak, merely says in reply, 'Thou knowest.' He is then informed, that 'these pure and happy spirits are those who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.' 'Therefore,' he adds, 'they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple.'

"Let us continually pray, that on that great day, when the whole assembled world shall stand before the 'judgment-seat of CHRIST,' we may be found among those happy spirits who are to be clothed in white robes. St. John informs us that sorrows, great sorrows will have marked their path to the new and heavenly Jerusalem, but they will be all forgotten when they have reached their Father's house, or they will be remembered only as subjects of gratitude; and, therefore, when I pour out my petitions to God daily for you, my precious children, I dare not pray that you may be shielded from all trials, but I do, that you may 'so pass the waves of this troublesome world, that finally you, and I, and all we have most loved on earth, may come to the land of everlasting life: there to reign with God, world without end, through JESUS CHRIST our Lord. Amen.'"

For some moments Mrs. Howard was so absorbed in the mingled feelings of the Christian and the mother, that she was unable to proceed. She afterward resumed her subject.

“We have wandered to a considerable distance from our field of flax, but I trust it has not been an entirely unprofitable excursion. We will now return to it.

“Flax, or the *linum*, has been cultivated from remote antiquity throughout a great part of Europe, Asia, and the north of Africa. The blossom of the flax is funnel formed; * the stem is generally a single one; the root is annual and fibrous; the whole plant grows to the height of eighteen or twenty inches: the flowers are large, and grow in a loose bunch; they are of a sky-blue color, and streaked with darker lines. This plant is supposed to have been originally a native of Egypt, as the earliest record we have of it is in the ninth chapter of Exodus, where it is mentioned as a plant which was cultivated abundantly in that country. Many people are surprised on this account to find the mummies wrapped in cotton cloth; but it is highly probable that mankind made thread of cotton before the use of flax was discovered; the former being found in a state ready for spinning, while the latter required a long and tedious process before it could be brought into that state.” †

“I was going to ask you, Mamma,” said Mary, when her mother paused, “what is meant by the flax being ‘bolled?’” Moses gives as a reason why the flax was smitten in that dreadful hail storm which

* See plate 2, figure 1.

† Green’s Universal Herbal.

the sins of the haughty Pharaoh brought down on Egypt, that it was 'bolled.' "

"Dr. Clarke tells us, my dear, that the Hebrew words may be translated, 'The flax was podded;' and he further adds, 'The word podded well expresses that globose seed vessel on the top of the stalk of flax which succeeds the flower.' I cannot inform you why the hail storm was particularly injurious to the plant when in that state, excepting that I suppose when it was younger, it could have rallied better afterward.

"We learn from the earliest historical records that Egypt, from remote antiquity, was famous for its manufactures of linen.

"You are probably both aware of the fact that it is from the fibrous stalk of the plant that the flax is made, which is used by the manufacturer. 'As soon as these become yellow, and the leaves fall off, they are pulled and fastened together, and they are then generally allowed to remain in this situation, and in an upright position, in the field, until the flax becomes quite dry. After the seed is removed, the stalks are again formed into bundles for rotting, which process is necessary to shorten the separation of the fibres: sometimes this is done by letting the flax remain in the open fields, but more generally by leaving it immersed in stagnant water. It is subsequently taken out, and dried, and laid on a wooden table, where it is beaten, in order to free it from the chaffy fragments. Afterward it is heckled, or combed, with an iron comb, and then again formed

into bundles, when it is ready for the manufacturer.' ”

FRANKINCENSE.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Take unto thee sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum: these sweet spices, with pure frankincense; of each shall there be a like weight. And thou shalt make it a perfume, a confection after the art of the apothecary, tempered together, pure and holy. And as for the perfume which thou shalt make, ye shall not make to yourselves according to the composition thereof; it shall be unto thee, holy to the LORD.—*Exod. xxx. 34, 35, 37.*

“I shall,” observed Mrs. Howard, “merely read to you an account of this gum, which served to form, as Moses informs us in the verses noted down by you, an important ingredient in the holy perfume of the Jewish tabernacle, and which is still, by mistaken religionists of the present day, brought into their churches to be wafted in the censers of their priests, as an acceptable offering to God. The article I have selected is from the *Encyclopedia Americana*, and is as follows:—

“Frankincense (called also *olibanum*, or simply *incense*) is a gum resin which distils from incisions made in the *boswellia thurifera*, a tree somewhat resembling the sumach, and belonging to the same natural family, inhabiting the mountains of India. It comes to us in semi-transparent, yellowish tears, or sometimes in masses, possessing a bitter and nauseous taste. When burnt, it exhales a strong aromatic odor, on which account it was employed in ancient temples, and still continues to be used in Catholic churches.

“That which is brought from Arabia is more highly esteemed than the Indian. The boswellia has pinnated leaves;* each small leaf of which is downy and oval, with an acute point, and having a serrated† or toothed edge, and very small flowers growing in simple racemes‡ or bunches.’

“We will now conclude for this evening,” said Mrs. Howard, “because the subject which will next engage our attention will detain us for a considerable time.”

* See frontispiece, figure 5.

See frontispiece, figure 5.

† See frontispiece, figure 5.

CHAPTER XI.

GOPHER WOOD.

And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them: and behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make thee an ark of gopher wood: rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch. And behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven: and every thing that is in the earth shall die. But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee. Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he — *Gen. vi. 13, 14, 17, 18, 22.*

WHEN the family party assembled again on the following evening, Mrs. Howard requested Harriet to read the sixth chapter of Genesis, in which God gave his commands to Noah, to prepare that extraordinary dwelling-place, in which the representatives of the present race of man, as well as of the brute creation, were to be preserved in safety, and borne on the bosom of that mighty mass of water, which was destined to desolate the earth on account of the iniquity of man.

When Harriet had closed her Bible, she observed, "I think, Mamma, that Noah's heart must have been filled with solemnity during the time that he was engaged in hewing the timber, and constructing that ark, which he knew was to be the means of

preserving him and his family during those awful scenes of whose approach he had been informed by God. I think he must have shed many bitter tears over the impending fate of his unhappy friends and acquaintances, who would not be persuaded to turn from their sins, and find shelter in the ark. He could not but fancy what their miserable condition would be, when they should, at last, be roused from their insensibility, and be made to feel the truth of what he had been preaching to them about."

"Yes, my dear," replied her mother, "his soul must have been often deeply moved in the contemplation of this approaching catastrophe. I can seldom, if ever, read that short but most striking sentence in the description of this great event, 'and the Lord shut him in,' without a feeling of solemnity approaching to the deepest awe. Only strive to realize his state of mind at that moment: he knew then that the day of grace was passed for his unhappy companions, and he could not but think how soon the scene without would be full of weeping, and wailing, and wo unutterable. His faith, we are led to suppose, had been much tried during the long period in which he was engaged in building the ark, by the ridicule and infidelity of his acquaintances. And most probably he had trials of faith to sustain, of a severe, though of a different kind, during his tedious confinement."

Harriet remarked that she felt interested in every circumstance which was connected with the ark,

and that she had a great desire to know in what form it was built.

“That, my dear,” said her mother, “must, of course, ever remain a subject for conjecture: I have, however, met with some very ingenious observations on the subject in Calmet: he thinks it very probable that, in form, the ark was constructed like the dwelling-houses in Arabia at the present day: he gives his reasons for this opinion, and also a plate of one of these buildings.

“We will pass over this part of the subject at present, and perhaps at some future day we may take it up again, and find employment for the evenings of another winter, in investigating this and some other passages of Scripture which are connected with the local customs and manners of the East. Our business for the present is to examine into the history of the material of which the ark was built—the gopher wood which Noah was directed to take, and which has given rise to so much discussion among critics.

“The term is said by Hebrew scholars not to be used elsewhere in Scripture, and therefore it has been generally thought not improbable, that the words gopher wood may refer to some of the kinds of wood spoken of subsequently by Moses, as being employed in the erection of the sacred buildings.

“Some writers suppose that the gopher wood and cedar were the same wood; others contend that the tree we are in search of is to be found in the cypress: the latter support their theory by declaring that

there is 'a strong similarity between the Greek word for cypress and the Hebrew gopher. They also affirm that the cypress is not liable to rot, or to be destroyed by worms: that it was anciently used in ship-building, and that it abounded in Assyria, where they say the ark was built.' Some writers, with far less probability on their side, have contended that 'reeds were the materials used, and that this immense fabric was formed of wicker work.'

"But the author of 'Scripture Illustrated' has given us very plausible reasons for believing that the gopher wood was in reality the pine, and some of these remarks I will relate to you. I observed that the term gopher wood occurred nowhere else in Scripture; but this writer asserts that when the destruction of Sodom is described by Moses, he says, 'God rained on Sodom (gophsit) brimstone,' or inflamed sulphur. And he continues, 'Now what wood is more, or equally likely to be named gopher, from its inflammability, than the pine, which furnishes pitch, tar, and turpentine: all of which are among the chief inflammables. That this wood, in its natural state, is capable of taking fire, needs no other proof than the frequent use of its splinters instead of candles in the North.' He also gives descriptions of several ancient medals, in which the device, he thinks, implies, on the part of the ancient heathen, a traditionary belief in the fact of the human family having been preserved alive in an ark or chest. And it is somewhat remarkable, that a pine tree forms part of the device on many of these

medals. Branches of pine were also given to the victors in certain games held in honor of Neptune, and trees of the same were planted round his temples."

"These facts," observed Harriet, "do, dear Mother, make the idea appear probable, that the pine was in reality the same with the gopher wood. But I certainly should not have had ingenuity enough to find out such an explanation for myself, had I merely been shown, without any comment, the medal of Neptune, accompanied with a pine. And I certainly never should have thought of a heathen fable being made use of to confirm the truth of Scripture."

"It is not more surprising, Harriet, than the fact that some of the most extraordinary proofs of the fulfilment of prophecy, presented to us in modern times, have been furnished by infidel travellers, who never supposed, when detailing the wonders of the countries through which they had passed, that they were furnishing facts which would serve to strengthen the faith of Christians in a most remarkable manner. Thus we are made to see 'that God can even make the wrath of man to praise him.'

"Since we all," said Mrs. Howard, "appear disposed to concur in the opinion of the gopher wood and pine being the same tree, I think it will be well to give you an account of this noble class of trees. You recollect my reading you, from the Christian Keepsake, an interesting description of the cedars of Lebanon; the same article also informs us that pine

trees are also found there, though not in great abundance. And I must not forget to notice a fact related by Messrs. Smith and Dwight, in their *Missionary Researches in Armenia*. These travellers assert, that 'all the way from Febriz to Erzeroom, a distance of more than three hundred miles in a westerly direction, and nearly the whole breadth of Armenia, they found no forest trees except the little cluster of pines at the shepherd's bridge over the Araxes.' The family of pines was formerly classed by botanists, and is still by some of them, with those of the spruce and larch, in one genus. The pine is easily to be distinguished from the other two classes I have mentioned, from the circumstance that its narrow, bristle-like leaves are collected in numbers of from two to five, in one short cylindrical sheath. There are many varieties of the pine, of which almost half the number are natives of North America.

"The long-leaved pine, besides supplying the United States with nearly all the resinous matter required in ship-building, furnishes a large amount for export to the West Indies, Great Britain, and other parts of Europe. From it are manufactured turpentine, spirits of turpentine, rosin, tar, and pitch; so that, you see it may well deserve the epithet of gopher or inflammable. It is supposed that the average product of turpentine is one barrel annually from about thirty good-sized trees. The species which we know under the name of white pine, sometimes attains a diameter of five feet, and a height

of one hundred and fifty feet. Another variety, which grows west of the Rocky Mountains, rises to the enormous size of two hundred feet, and has been known to measure twenty feet in diameter."

When Mrs. Howard had ended her account of this noble forest tree, her daughters thanked her, and told her that they should hereafter regard the pine with peculiar interest, as it would continue to be associated in their minds with the miraculous preservation of Noah and his family through the deluge of waters.

"It may also serve, my dear children, as a useful beacon to us when we observe this tall and graceful tree rising amidst the surrounding scene. We shall thus be reminded of the tragical fate of those unhappy beings who would not listen to the warning of God, to flee from the wrath to come. We have indeed the holy word of God pledged to assure us that we have no second deluge to dread. But we have the just anger of our Judge to fear, if we wander from him, and die impenitent. I know not, my dear girls, how I can better close the labors of this evening than by one of the prayers from our baptismal service, which strikes me as peculiarly appropriate to the train of thought in which we have been engaged."

The household were then assembled, and a portion of Scripture was read, and after the customary evening prayer, Mrs. Howard added the following beautiful one which she had previously referred to.

"Almighty and everlasting God, who, of thy great

mercy, didst save Noah and his family in the ark from perishing by water ; and also didst safely lead the children of Israel thy people through the Red Sea, figuring thereby thy holy baptism ; and by the baptism of thy well-beloved Son JESUS CHRIST in the river Jordan, didst sanctify water, to the mystical washing away of sin ; we beseech thee, for thine infinite mercies, that thou wilt look upon us ; wash us, and sanctify us, with the HOLY GHOST ; that we, being delivered from thy wrath, may be received into the ark of CHRIST'S Church ; and being steadfast in faith, joyful through hope, and rooted in charity, may so pass the waves of this troublesome world, that finally we may come to the land of everlasting life ; there to reign with thee, world without end, through JESUS CHRIST our Lord. *Amen.*'"

CHAPTER XII.

GOURD OF JONAH, GALBANUM, GRASS.

So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city. And the LORD GOD prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd. But GOD prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered. And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that GOD prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live. And GOD said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death. Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand, and also much cattle?—*Jonah* iv. 5-11.

“PERHAPS, my dear children, you will feel inclined to smile,” said Mrs. Howard, “when I inform you that there was, in the earlier ages of the Church, so much discussion among theological disputants, and of such a warm character, with regard to the gourd of Jonah, as to induce one of the fathers of the primitive Church to brand another with the charge of heresy, on account of the opinion formed of it by the latter. St. Jerome, after investigating

various accounts, came to the conclusion that the plant which afforded such seasonable relief to the prophet Jonah in his distress, was the ivy. But so greatly did this idea conflict with the opinions of St. Augustine, that the latter, in the height of controversy, (that ever bitter foe to the spirit of the Gospel,) accused Jerome of heresy, and even went so far as to carry his accusation to the court at Rome. Augustine was confident that gourd was the correct translation of the Hebrew word used in the original, and he called in the Septuagint, and the Arabic, and Syriac versions, in confirmation of his opinion. Both these good men became heated and irritated in an argument about the identity of a plant which neither had ever seen, and the subject remained unsettled. Other writers, and among them Calmet, think it probable that both Jerome and Augustine were mistaken in their ideas, and instead of writing this word either as gourd or ivy, they incline to the opinion that the plant in question was the *elkeroa* of the Arabs, which is the name given in that country to our *palma Christi*, a vegetable production with which you are all familiar.

“The traveller Niebuhr observes, ‘I saw, for the first time, at Barsa, the plant *elkeroa*. It has the form of a tree, the trunk of which appeared to me rather to resemble leaves than wood. Each branch of the *elkeroa* has but one large leaf with six or seven foldings in it. This plant grew near a rivulet, which watered it amply, and in five months it grew to the height of eight feet, and bore at once flowers





ORIENTAL GOURD.—Plate 9.
The size much diminished in drawing.

and fruit, both ripe and unripe. The flowers and leaves which I gathered withered a few moments afterward. At Aleppo the same tree is known by the name of palma Christi. The Christians and Jews of Mosul, the ancient Nineveh, say, however, that it was not the elkeroa whose shadow refreshed Jonah, but a sort of gourd, which is known among them by the name of elkerra, which has very large leaves, very large fruit, and lasts about four months.' I will show you a painting* of a gourd, the seed of which was brought from the East, and which may possibly resemble that of the elkerra. As for myself," continued Mrs. Howard, "I cannot but think it most probable that this elker-ra, or gourd of Mosul, was the plant which caused the prophet, in his grief at its destruction, to forget himself, and express so much peevish impatience. In confirmation of this opinion, I shall here cite a passage from the travels of Volney, who little dreamed, in the pride of his infidelity, that his authority would be brought forward to illustrate that sacred volume, which, in his madness, he professed to hate. In his travels through Egypt, he says, 'It is no doubt the salt property of the air and earth, which, added to the heat of the climate of Egypt, gives vegetation an activity which is almost incredible to the inhabitants of our cold climate. Wherever plants have water, the rapidity of their growth is prodigious. Whoever has travelled to Cairo or Ro-

* See plate 9.

setta knows that the species of gourd called elkerra will, in twenty-four hours, send out shoots four inches long.’”

“Neither of these plants which you have mentioned, Mamma,” remarked Harriet, “appear to grow with at all the same rapidity that is said to have characterized Jonah’s gourd. You remember that is said to have ‘come up in a night, and perished in a night.’”

“I am so happy, my dear child, as to be able, in a measure, to relieve your difficulties on this account. The expression you have quoted is said, by some able Hebrew scholars, to be incorrectly translated; and that the phrase would have been more happily rendered in this manner, ‘Which a son of night was, and as a son of night died.’ Now this, if you will reflect on the words, does not imply that the gourd grew to maturity in one night alone, but may equally well be explained by its growing principally, if not entirely, by night. And this fact is in strict accordance with the result of my own experience when watching the progress of vegetation during the hot season in our own climate. For instance, I have measured the growth of a shoot of the multiflora rose, which, in the course of twenty-four hours, equalled several inches: during the heat of the day, it grew very little, while in the moist atmosphere of an August night, it completed the remaining inches. Professor Forskall found several species of the gourd, cucurbita, growing in Egypt. One variety he describes, which bore large fruit of a globular form.

This, he informs us, is not eatable, but when dried is used as a kind of flagon, being very light, capacious, and smooth, and frequently of a foot and a half in diameter. The smaller varieties of the gourd you have frequently seen planted in the country, and they afford, when trained over piazzas and trellices, a very pleasant shade.

“We have now examined pretty freely into the history of the gourd, but I cannot dismiss the subject without trying to point out to your notice, my dear girls, a few lessons, which I think we may draw from the subject of Jonah’s history, which has become so intimately associated with his favorite plant in the minds of the readers of the sacred volume. We may here learn how foolish and vain, as well as sinful, a thing it is for any mortal to attempt to oppose their wishes to the will of the great God. If we will not gently, and with a childlike spirit, submit to the will of God, when that has been plainly made known to us, he can call in the very elements, the winds and the waves, to compel us to obedience. And here, too, I must observe, how much suffering Jonah would have been spared, had he at once, without opposition, submitted to the commands of God. It was his will, his stubborn will, and not his obedience to God, which brought in its train so many painful trials. And not only would he have been saved from the shipwreck and the tempestuous ocean, and from his dark and dismal abode, but he would have experienced peace and enjoyment

of mind in the act of submission; for God has so formed our minds, that there shall always be a pleasant frame of feeling following the performance of a right action. The history of Jonah presents us likewise with a most interesting instance of the forbearance and long-suffering of God with a sinful world, and also with the infirmities of his servants. Observe how much more desirous he was to spare guilty Nineveh than was Jonah; then mark the fatherly tenderness, the patient reasoning of God with the prophet under his peevish impatience. He mildly inquires, ‘Doest thou well to be angry?’ The self-willed Jonah obstinately continues, ‘I do well to be angry, even unto death.’ Still the gracious God continues to expostulate with his rebellious child, and though the sequel of the story is not given in the sacred volume, I have no doubt that his perverseness was finally subdued by the tender treatment of his heavenly Father.

“We are not likely to be placed, like the prophet, under the shadow of a favorite gourd, until our hearts become wedded to it; but still we find ourselves often getting our affections so closely entwined around other objects, as, for instance, a beloved parent, or sister, or child, that in the enjoyment of their beloved society, we are in danger of forgetting our entire dependence on God, and then he sees it necessary to send some worm or other to prey on our sweet gourds, and make them wither. If we should become thus entangled in our affections, my dear

girls, and God should, in mercy, remove the idolized blessing, let us pray that we may be enabled to submit meekly to the rod which is only used for our good."

GALBANUM.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Take unto thee sweet spices, stacte, onycha, and galbanum: of each of these there shall be a like weight; and thou shalt make it a perfume, a confection, after the art of the apothecary, tempered together, pure and holy.—*Exod.* xxx. 34, 35.

"The galbanum," said Mrs. Howard, "is a gum which is obtained from several species of the genus bubon. The bubon galbanum rises with an upright stalk to the height of eight or ten feet. When any part of the plant is broken, there flows out a thin milky substance, which is strongly scented. Galbanum is obtained partly as it issues of its own accord from the stalk, but principally by making incisions in it near the root. As it flows from this part of the plant it hardens, like the gum of the cherry. This plant is a native of Syria, Persia, and the East Indies, and is used medicinally.

"The leaves are wedge-shaped,* and finely-toothed: the flowers are produced in an umbel, and are small, and of a white color."

* See frontispiece, figure 6.

G R A S S.*

And GOD said, Let the earth bring forth grass.—*Gen. i. 11.*

For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away : but the word of the LORD endureth for ever.—1 *Pet. i. 24, 25.*

“Grass is one of the most humble productions of the vegetable world, but though apparently insignificant in itself, it has an intimate connection with the comfort of mankind, both in their civilized and savage state, since it affords the chief subsistence to our cattle of various kinds, from which man either directly or indirectly draws his principal nourishment. There is a peculiarity also in the history of this unpretending family of plants, which must ever give them a charm in the eyes of the Christian. It carries us back to that period in Moses’ narrative of the creation of this world, when the great and glorious Trinity, in the progress of their mysterious work, had just separated the earth from the sea : that mighty operation was no sooner commanded than it was executed, and now a fresh display of Almighty power is to be exhibited : it was ushered in by the simple command of God, ‘Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind.’ No sooner was this word of the Almighty Creator heard, than the beautiful, complicated, and extraordinary work of vegetation commenced, and the unpretending grass of the field sprang into life, diminutive in itself,

* James i. 9, 10, 11 ; Isaiah xl. 6

but ennobled from the circumstance of its ushering into being that lovely portion of the works of God which have from that time to the present hour continued to 'clothe the earth with beauty for rebellious man.'

"I wish you, my dear children, particularly to notice how exactly the history of the progress of creation, in the sacred Scriptures, is in accordance with what modern discoveries in science have proved would have been the most natural series of advancement. It was not known satisfactorily, until the last century, how entirely essential light is to perfecting vegetation; and yet Moses expressly and simply states the fact, that light was created, and the sun placed in the heavens as a light by day, before he alludes to the appearance even of the most minute vegetable production. If we examine even one little blade of grass, we shall find much to wonder at and admire. Dr. Clarke observes, 'All the skill, wisdom, and power of men and angels combined, could not produce one single grain of wheat. And who can account for, or comprehend the structure of a single tree or plant? The root, the stem, the bark, the sap vessels, the leaves, the flowers, and the fruit, are each so many mysteries.' Among botanists, grasses are humble plants feebly supported by jointed stems, and perishing after a single season; but yet they constitute a very numerous family, distributed over the whole earth, and comprising many of the most useful of all vegetables—as wheat, rye, barley, oats, rice, Indian corn, and the sugar-cane, besides a vast

number of species not eatable, and used only for fodder. The roots of these plants are fibrous, the stems cylindrical, provided at intervals with knots or joints, from each of which arises a long narrow leaf, sheathing the stem for some distance. The flowers are produced from the upper sheaths, and are disposed in heads, spikes, or in loose bunches. More than three hundred species of grasses inhabit the United States.' " *

When Mrs. Howard had finished reading the above extract, she inquired if either of her daughters could cite any passages from the Bible, in which grass is used in a figurative manner.

"I remember several instances of the kind," replied Mary: "one occurs in the thirty-seventh Psalm, in which David declares that 'the workers of iniquity shall soon be cut down like grass, and wither as the green herb.' And again, in the one hundred and second Psalm, he says, when 'his heart was overwhelmed with grief,' that it was 'smitten and withered like grass.' Then again, St. James exhorts the rich man to humility, by reminding him that he, 'as the flower of the grass, should pass away,' and all his splendor should 'fade away like the grass,' when it is exposed to the scorching rays of the sun."

"I recollect also, Mamma," said Harriet, "some beautiful verses in the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, in which he declares, that 'all flesh is as grass, and all

* Encyclopedia Americana.

the glory of man is as the flower of the grass, the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of the LORD endureth for ever.' ”

“ I must remark, my dear girls, that these comparisons of the frail tenure by which we hold life to the short-lived grass of the field, are much more striking, with regard to the state in which it appears in the countries of the East, than in our milder climate, where the earth, during so large a portion of the year, is clothed with the richest verdure.

“ You both most probably remember a very affecting figurative use made of grass by our blessed LORD, in his sermon on the mount : in this he conjures his disciples to trust to the goodness and love of their heavenly Father to provide them with food and raiment, by the recollection of his providential care in ‘ clothing the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven.’ Now this use of grass appears an extraordinary one to us, who have been so bountifully supplied by God with fuel ; but travellers in the East describe the sufferings of the inhabitants for want of provision of this kind as being often very great. Coal they are destitute of, and wood is exceedingly rare, and often, indeed, it is not to be procured at any price ; and therefore they are obliged to have recourse to various extraordinary substitutes. Sir John Chardin says, ‘ They resort to leaves, twigs, refuse, and sometimes to vine cuttings, *and even to grass*, for the purpose of heating their ovens.’ ”

Mrs. Howard, finding their hour for evening prayers had arrived, now closed her books.

CHAPTER XIII.

HEATH, HEMLOCK, HYSSOP, JUNIPER, LENTILES, LILY.

Flee, save your lives, and be like the heath in the wilderness.—
Jer. xlviii. 6.

Thus saith the LORD, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land, and not inhabited.—*Jer.* xvii. 5, 6.

WHEN the family party was again assembled, and was prepared to recommence the study, in the pursuit of which so many evenings had been already passed, Mrs. Howard observed, “I am afraid, my dear children, that I shall not be able to give you any very satisfactory information with regard to the subject which first presents itself to our notice to-night: inasmuch as the majority of the commentators on these two passages of Jeremiah which you have selected, seem to consider the word heath as being improperly used in both these instances. The Septuagint translation of the verse, ‘Flee, save your lives, and be like the heath in the wilderness,’ is widely different, and is as follows, ‘Flee, save your lives, and you shall be like the *wild* ass in the wilderness.’ And this certainly is more in character with the rest of the chapter, and appears a more appropriate figure of speech.

“Similar diversity of opinion prevails with respect to the heath spoken of in your second quotation from Jeremiah. Some writers contend that the tamarisk tree is intended, while in the Septuagint, instead of the expression, ‘heath in the desert,’ we find merely ‘a leafless tree.’ Calmet quotes a remark from another writer on this passage, which is to this effect. ‘If any particular tree is intended in this place, the tamarisk tree is as likely to be it as any other: the branches of these trees are produced in so straggling a manner, as not to be by any art capable of being trained up regularly; their leaves are generally scattered on the branches and fall away in winter. But can the tamarisk live in a salt land, or in parched places? I would rather seek for the plant in question among the lichens, a species of plants which are the last productions of vegetation under the severe cold of the frozen zone, or under the glowing heats of equatorial regions; and which thus seem the best qualified to endure parched places, and a salt land. Hasselquist enumerates several different kinds of lichens which were seen by him in Egypt, Syria, and Arabia. I would also allude to what the Arabians say of their plant, murar, which may perhaps be the same with the Hebrew word here rendered heath. It is of a sharp taste, astringent, and when browsed upon by the camels, it causes their gums to contract around their teeth, and renders them bare, and causes the lips of those animals which have eaten of it to adhere together. The murar grows to the height of a shrub.’”

HEMLOCK.*

Ye turned the fruits of righteousness into nemlock.—*Amos* vi. 12.

“We shall turn from the heath to another vegetable production mentioned in our English Bible, and around which no less uncertainty is thrown. You will find the hemlock noticed in *Hosea* x. 4: in the previous passage, the prophet had been speaking of Israel in her miserably distracted state, ‘with a heart divided with idols,’ and despoiled of a king for her sins: among other instances of her unhappy condition, he adds, in the fourth verse, ‘Thus judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field.’ The Hebrew word which is here translated hemlock is said generally to signify venom. ‘The comparison in this place, you will observe, is to a noxious weed, which growing among the corn overpowers the useful vegetable. If the figure of speech is supposed to allude to a plant which, taken literally, grows only in the furrows of the field, then we shall be much restricted in finding such as will answer to this character only. But if we may take in the ditches around, and the moist sunken places in the fields also, which I partly suspect, then we may include other plants, and I do not see why the noxious hemlock may not be intended.’ †

“There has been much dispute among authors, whether the hemlock of the ancients was the same with the modern hemlock, *conium maculatum*, or

* *Hosea* x. 4.

† *Calmet*:

the water hemlock, *cicuta virosa*. Both of these plants are poisonous in their character, though the *cicuta* is the most so.

“The conium is occasionally found naturalized in waste places in our own country: the root resembles that of a parsnip of a small size, the stem is from four to six feet in height, hollow, round, and covered with a bluish powder, which soon wipes off; it is also spotted and streaked with dark purple spots: the bottom leaves are large and dark green, but paler underneath, and pinnate: * the blossom is white. ‘This plant was stigmatized formerly as one of the most noxious of vegetable poisons, has of late been considered a useful and powerful medicine.’ Perhaps, as the *cicuta* is considered by some writers to be the hemlock of Hosea, you will be interested in hearing a short description of it also. The stem of this plant is round and hollow: the leaves are also pinnate, † and the blossoms white: both the conium and the *cicuta* produce their flowers in an umbel. ‡ The latter plant grows generally near stagnant waters, or in shallow and slow water courses. It is considered as being one of the rankest of vegetable poisons: cows are not unfrequently killed by eating it early in the spring, though when the plant grows older its scent drives cattle from it.”

* See frontispiece, figure 5.

† See frontispiece, figure 5.

‡ See plate 2, figure 4.

HYSSOP. *

Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out, and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the passover. And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two side-posts with the blood that is in the basin; and none of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning. For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel and upon the two side-posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you. And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance for ever.—*Exod.* xii. 21-24.

“There are many circumstances, my dear children, which combine together to invest the humble hyssop with a character of deep interest. The verses which you have written down from Exodus serve to show what a conspicuous place it held in the ceremonies of that awful night of the first institution of the passover; and I believe it always continued to be used when that ceremony was repeated yearly among the Jews.

“When the fatal disease of leprosy, that scourge most dreaded by the Jew, had seized on its unhappy victim, and he, with a trembling heart, repaired to the temple of his God for the relief which could only there be obtained, the suffering leper was commanded to bring with him to the priest, ‘two birds alive and clean, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop.’ All of these articles were to be used in the

* Leviticus xiv. 4; Psalm li. 7; 1 Kings iv. 33; John xix. 29; Hebrews ix. 19.

solemn ceremonies connected with the purification of the leper and the leprous house.

“It is not improbable that the hyssop might have possessed some properties which rendered it valuable as a means of cleansing and purifying the bodily system, which occasioned its being introduced as a type into these Jewish ceremonies of that blessed change which takes place in the condition of the sinner, when he is enabled by faith to lay hold on the Lord JESUS CHRIST as his Sayiour, both from the guilt of past sin, and from the power and dominion of it for the future. Thus, in alluding to that pardon of his sins for which his soul was thirsting, David exclaims, in the fervor of his penitential prayer, ‘Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean,’ by which expression we cannot for a moment suppose him to allude to any thing else than the cleansing of his conscience from the pollution of past sin, by faith in the atoning blood of his Redeemer.

“You doubtless remember that when Solomon’s acquirements are enumerated in the Bible, among other things, it is said in 1 Kings iv. 33, that ‘he spake of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall.’ Calmet describes this plant in the following manner:—‘It shoots out abundance of suckers from one root only: it is hard in substance, and grows about a foot and a half high. On both sides of the stalk, at regular distances, it pushes out longish leaves which are hard, odoriferous, warm, and a little bitter. The blossom is on the top of the stem, and is

of an azure color. It is very probable that hyssop grows to a great height in Judea, since it is said that the soldiers, having filled a sponge with vinegar, put it upon hyssop, and presented it to our Saviour's mouth, who was then upon the cross.' "

JUNIPER.*

"We will now turn to the juniper tree, which is connected with a particularly striking incident in the life of the Prophet Elijah. You recollect the solemn scene described in the eighteenth chapter of the first Kings, where the Almighty manifested himself in Mount Carmel, and caused a miraculous fire to descend and consume the sacrifice which Elijah had previously drenched with water, in order to render the conflagration more striking and supernatural. 'This event was, you know, followed by the destruction of the false prophets of Baal, in immense numbers, which so excited the rage of the wicked Jezebel, that she induced her husband, the haughty Ahab, to attempt the life of Elijah. This holy and persecuted servant of God was thus obliged to flee from the malice of Jezebel. 'The scene is described with beautiful simplicity by the sacred historian. 'He arose and went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he

* 1 Kings xix.

might die : and said, It is enough ; now, O LORD, take away my life ; for I am not better than my fathers. And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head : and he did eat and drink, and laid him down again.'

"Mr. Evelyn thus describes this tree. 'The juniper, though naturally a native of Britain, is very little known in many parts of the country ; for it grows only in a dry, chalky, or sandy soil, and where the soil is of an opposite character it is rarely found. When planted in a good situation, it will rise to the height of fifteen or sixteen feet, and produce numerous branches from the bottom to the top. These branches are exceedingly tough, and covered with a smooth bark of a reddish color, having a tinge of purple. The leaves are narrow and sharp-pointed, and grow by threes on the branches : their upper surface has a gray streak down the middle, but the under is of a fine green throughout. The flowers are small, and of a yellowish color. They are succeeded by the berries, which are of a bluish shade when ripe.' The Phœnician juniper grows about twenty feet high, and branches considerably. It generally takes somewhat the form of a pyramid. The whole plant has a strong aromatic smell : the wood when burnt emits a fragrant perfume. It is of a reddish color, hard and durable."

LENTILES.*

And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he was faint. And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same *red pottage*; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom. And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he swore unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of *lentiles*: and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau sold his birthright.—*Gen. xxv. 29-34.*

“We often hear of the fact,” said Mrs. Howard, “of certain nations taking particular flowers as their characteristic emblems; and thus the English having selected the rose, the Scotch the thistle, and the Irish the shamrock or clover, a bouquet of these flowers mingled together is understood at once to refer to Great Britain and Ireland as a united kingdom. Now, I think, we may designate the lentile as the national flower of the Edomites; since it was from the red color of the pottage for which their founder Esau sold his birthright, that the name of Edom was given to him, and from thence Edomite became the name common to his descendants.

“It was for the trifling gratification which Jacob’s savory pottage of lentiles afforded to the sensual and profane Esau that he was induced to sell his birthright, and thus incur the severe displeasure of God. This great blessing, thus improperly purchased by

* 2 Samuel xvii 27-29; Ezekiel iv. 9.

Jacob, brought a train of misfortunes after it, to punish him for his duplicity. Banished from his father's house, he was compelled to fly for his life, and, as a lonely wanderer, to submit to hardship, toil, and deception himself, besides a long series of afflictions, from the undutiful conduct of his own children. But these, by the kind providence of God, were overruled for his spiritual good, and in his old age the patriarch returned, a changed and subdued character, to the home of his fathers.

“We find lentiles again spoken of among the articles which the kind-hearted Barzillai brought to refresh David and his men with, when they ‘were hungry, and thirsty, and weary, in the wilderness.’ The heart of David was at that time peculiarly sensitive to kindness, for he was then compelled to become an unhappy wanderer, by the unnatural conduct of his son Absalom.

“The lentile is a kind of bean, and St. Augustine thus speaks of it:—‘Lentiles are used as food in Egypt, for this plant grows abundantly in that country, which renders the lentiles of Alexandria so famous.’

“In Barbary they are still dressed in the same manner as beans, and Dr. Shaw says, ‘They make a pottage of them of a chocolate color, which is probably like Esau’s red pottage.’

“The eroum lens, or common lentile, is much eaten by the poorer inhabitants of the Levant. It rises, with rather a weak stalk, to about eighteen

inches in height: it has pinnated leaves,* coming out at each joint, like the pea. It generally terminates in a small tendril, by which the plant attempts to sustain its weakness against some stronger shrub. The flowers spring out of short stems from the sides of the branches: they are small, and purple, and pea-shaped: the pods are short and flat, containing two or three flat, round seeds."

L I L Y. †

As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.—
Canticles ii. 2.

I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall grow as the lily.—
Hosea xiv. 5.

"I have no doubt," continued Mrs. Howard, "that Harriet, who is so great a lover of flowers, will be much pleased to turn from a coarse and homely vegetable to the delicately-beautiful and fragrant lily. The lily you will find holding a conspicuous place in the emblematic language of the Bible, and also in ancient legends which are not inspired. The lily, or fleur de lis, is the flower which the French monarchs originally adopted as their national emblem, and you will find it on most of the French coins. I have been told, however, that since the last revolution of 1830, that it has been removed from many of their public edifices, because the emblematic representation of an unassuming and unoffending flower had

* See frontispiece, figure 5.

† Matthew vi. 28, 29; Luke xii. 27.

become associated with ideas of party violence. With regard to the employment of it figuratively, in the sacred volume, you will find, by consulting first Kings seventh chapter, and second Chronicles fourth chapter, that some of the sacred vessels of the temple, and also parts of the ornaments of Solomon's houses, 'were wrought with flowers of lily work.' The most beautiful notice of the lily which occurs in the Bible is to be found in our Saviour's sermon on the mount, in which our LORD cautions us to beware of anxiety about dress or personal decoration, by a fine allusion to the unassuming beauty of 'the lily of the field;' which he declares surpasses, in its charms, all the splendor of which Solomon could boast."

"What kind of lily is it supposed our LORD referred to, Mamma?" inquired Mary, "for you know we have a great variety of these plants. I have always fancied it was my favorite flower, the fragrant and modest, as well as beautiful, lily of the valley."

"It may possibly have been this elegant little flower which our Saviour had in his eye when he made that beautiful allusion to 'the lily of the field;' since it grows in a wild state in the southern part of Europe. But there is greater probability for supposing that our common white lily, which perfumes our gardens so powerfully, was the plant intended by our LORD, as this last is a native of Syria, Judea, and Persia; and certainly, in point of fragrance and purity of coloring, it merits the encomium passed on it in the sermon on the mount. There are, you

know, Harriet, lilies also of bright and gaudy colors, and some writers imagine that our LORD referred to some of these, and meant to say that the most brilliant garments of Solomon could not vie with the tints of the crimson or orange lily. But we have already exceeded our usual time, and I must therefore suspend our conversation for the present."

CHAPTER XIV.

MALLOW, MANDRAKE, MANNA, MINT, MULBERRY,
MUSTARD, MYRRH.

WHEN Mrs. Howard proposed the plan which she was now pursuing, for the employment of the winter evenings, she did not suppose that every night, for so many months, could be thus occupied, without the subject being exhausted, nor indeed intend it. The evenings of the Lord's day were of course not intended to be included, as they were devoted to employments more peculiarly of a religious character; and this tender mother endeavored also to give to the closing hours of the week a tone which might render them a preparation for the sabbath, in her children's minds, as well as in her own. So that two days of each week were always excluded from this kind of occupation, and some of the remaining five were often passed without any allusion to their botanical studies; as, for instance, on occasion of a visit from a friend, Mrs. Howard thought it advisable to suspend their favorite occupation; not only because it might not be agreeable to the visiter, but also from other motives. She knew that young persons were liable, from the corruption of their hearts, to have the purity and simplicity of their feelings impaired in carrying on any undertaking, and she earnestly

desired, as much as possible, to keep them from doing or saying any thing in order to obtain the praise of man. Therefore, the young Howards' studies were often suspended by circumstances of this kind; but this enabled them to exercise habits of self-denial, when unexpectedly interrupted, and it also prolonged the season of their enjoyment to a later period of the winter. An interval of more than ten days had elapsed between their last conversation and the present evening, and the young ladies returned with increased zest to their favorite pursuit.

M A L L O W.

Who cut up mallows by the bushes, and juniper roots for meat.
—*Job xxx. 4.*

"The subject which first presents itself to our notice this evening," observed Mrs. Howard, "is the mallow, which, I believe, is only alluded to in this solitary text from Job, which you have marked down for me; and even this partial use of the word appears to have excited a good deal of warm discussion. Hebrew scholars assert that the expression in the original has an evident reference to the character of saltiness, and therefore they suppose the plant alluded to by Job must have been one which possessed saline properties. Some have imagined a species of the *salsola*, or saltwort, to have been the vegetable production in question. The genus *salsola* consists of low, spreading, and thorny plants, which, both in our own country and elsewhere,

grow in the vicinity of the sea. From the ashes of one species, the *salsola kali*, or barilla plant, the Castile soap is manufactured.”

M A N D R A K E S.

Thy mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits.—*Canticles* vii. 14.

“Great perplexity also prevails with respect to this plant among commentators. Calmet, Linnæus, and Professor Forskall, concur in supposing that the mandrake belonged to the melon family; and the latter has even identified it with a species of cucumber which is cultivated in Egypt, and which he thus describes:—‘The flowers are yellow, and grow close together; the fruit is globose, oval, and smooth; it is of a yellow color, with unequal spots of a dark, tawny hue, inclining to yellow, and meeting together in lines toward each end of the fruit: the pulp is watery and full of seeds. When the fruit is in a young state it is covered with hairs, but these disappear afterward, and it becomes quite smooth. The smell is strong, and not unpleasant, and on that account the fruit is cultivated.’ This perfume Professor Forskall supposes is what is alluded to by Solomon.

M A N N A.

“I will take this opportunity,” said Mrs. Howard, “of referring to the manna of the Scriptures—that article which David calls figuratively, ‘angels’ food,’

because it is supposed by many to have been a vegetable production. Calmet says, 'With regard to this interesting subject, the manna was probably, like many other miracles, partly natural, and partly miraculous. It is certain that manna is now found on trees and shrubs in the East, and perhaps in this very desert. But that it should fall in such quantities, and under such restrictions and peculiarities, is certainly not according to nature; that none of it should fall on the sabbath is altogether extraordinary; that it should melt by the heat of the sun is not so wonderful, since what is found at the present day in those countries exhales like the dew after the sun is hot. Nor am I certain that there was any thing unaccountable in the quantity gathered for each person, since it is likely the people collected according to their families, and the number of children in each would account for a considerable apparent difference of quantity.'

"Niebuhr, the traveller, says, 'Manna is found at present in different parts of the East, but I own that I neglected to procure information at the most celebrated places, that is to say, around Mount Sinai, which is so famous for the manna of the Israelites. At Merden it attaches itself, like a meal or powder, to the leaves of certain trees, which they call ballot at Aleppo. Some affirm that they have found manna between Merden and Diarbekr, on the trees called by the inhabitants elimas. All agree in declaring that, in that vicinity, it was principally gathered from those trees which produce the gall nut, that is, the

oaks. The gathering time of this manna is in July, or August, and they say it is most plentiful after a fog, or during moist weather, rather than when the atmosphere is clear. No care is taken of the trees which produce the manna at Merden, but when it falls from them any body who chooses may gather it in the woods, without asking or obtaining permission from government. It is gathered in three different ways, and it differs in quality accordingly. Some go to the woods before sunrise to gather it, which they do by shaking the leaves into a linen cloth; it is then quite white, and of the finest quality. If the manna is not gathered in the morning, it will melt in the sunbeams, if the day becomes hot; notwithstanding it is not lost, but it augments and thickens from day to day on the leaves. To obtain this kind of manna, the following process is made use of: as many leaves as can be collected are carried home and thrown into boiling water, by which means the thick glutinous matter is melted, and floats at the top like oil. Some persons will not take this trouble, but pound the leaves and manna together. This forms the manna of the most inferior quality, which is called, 'leaf manna.' Sometimes this production is called, 'heavenly food:' nevertheless, notwithstanding this name, the inhabitants of the East do not believe that it falls from heaven; for if so, then it would certainly be gathered on other kinds of trees. Manna is likewise collected in Persia, and in Kurdistan. I was assured at Bassa, that one kind of manna is obtained in great quantities.

near Ispahan, from a small thorny bush. I inquired for some of it, and found that it consisted of small grains, round and yellow, and consequently of the same figure as the manna of the Israelites is described to have been.' " *

When Mrs. Howard had finished reading this extract, Mary desired to know whether the manna that she had seen in the druggists' shops was the same production which Mr. Niebuhr describes.

"No," replied her mother; "that which you have seen is obtained by making incisions in the trunk and branches of a species of the ash. It first appears as a whitish juice, which thickens on being exposed to the air, and when dried forms a whitish or reddish-white granular substance, which is the manna of commerce. The tree is a native of Italy, and is cultivated extensively in Sicily. June and July are the two months of the year in which the manna is collected." †

"I have selected a short passage from Dr. Edward Clarke's travels in the Holy Land, which furnishes another notice of the manna of the East. Mrs. Howard then opened the volume, and read as follows:—'The Persian manna plant, *hedysarum alhazi*, which we had collected between Acre and Nazareth, flourished abundantly between Nazareth and Tiberias. This thorny vegetable is said to be the

* Niebuhr's travels.

† Encyclopedia Americana.

favorite food of the camel. It is found wild in Syria, Persia, Palestine, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Armenia, and Georgia.' ”

MINT.*

Wo unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.—*Matt.* xxiii. 23.

“This unassuming herb will be well worth considering this evening,” said Mrs. Howard, “if it leads us to a close examination of our hearts, in order to discover whether we are trying, by a strict observance of certain outward forms, to soothe our consciences, while retaining any known or cherished sins: these cannot indeed be rooted out of our hearts without the continual assistance of the HOLY SPIRIT, combined, on our parts, with fervent prayer, and constant vigilance. ‘The genus *mentha*, or mint, consists of more than sixty species, all of which grow in temperate climates. They have an agreeable odor, and have been celebrated from the most remote antiquity for their useful qualities. To the taste they are bitter, aromatic, and pungent. The species are herbaceous, nearly all perennial, having square stems, which bear opposite and simple leaves; the flowers are small, growing generally in whorls around the stalks.’

“The Jews,” continued Mrs. Howard, “were not

* Luke xi. 42.

obliged by their law to pay tithes of their garden herbs; but the Pharisees were fond of trying to work out a righteousness for themselves, and therefore with the most scrupulous care, they brought 'tithes of mint, and anise, and cummin,' for which indeed our LORD did not condemn them, but only for the spirit which influenced them in the performance of the action. God loves us to bring our smallest offering to him with the affectionate feelings of children, desirous, by so doing, to show our tender love to our beloved parent, and not with the spirit which influences slaves, who are hoping thereby to purchase freedom from a hard taskmaster. When our actions are animated by filial love, our heavenly Father disdains not to mark with his approbation even the gift of a cup of cold water to one of the least of his disciples."

MULBERRY.*

And the Philistines came up yet again, and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim. And when David inquired of the LORD, he said, Thou shalt not go up: but fetch a compass behind them, and come upon them over against the *mulberry trees*. And let it be when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the *mulberry trees*, that thou shalt bestir thyself; for then the LORD shall go out before thee to smite the host of the Philistines.—2 Sam. v. 22-24.

"There are considerable doubts," remarked Mrs. Howard, "whether the *mulberry tree* was known in Syria so early as in the days of David, and therefore some writers consider the use of it in our version as

* 1 Chronicles xiv. 14.

incorrect. Professor Forskall found two kinds of mulberry cultivated at Constantinople, the black and white. 'Both of them had heart-shaped leaves: in the black variety they were small, and of a yellowish green, in the white, they were larger and of a dark green. There is also a wild variety, but its fruit has little juice and a great quantity of seeds.'

MUSTARD.*

"Can you recollect, Mary," inquired Mrs. Howard, "the manner in which our LORD refers to the mustard plant?"

Mary replied, "Yes, dear Mother: he compares the growth of religion in the heart of man to that of the mustard seed after it has been planted in the ground. If you please, I will recite the passage." Mrs. Howard assented, and her daughter then continued. "'The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds, but when it is grown is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.' The same idea is, you know, repeated, Mamma, and nearly in the same words, in St. Mark and St. Luke."

"This reference to the growth of the mustard seed particularly commends itself to our notice," continued Mrs. Howard, "because our LORD institutes a comparison between it and the gradual

* Matthew xiii. 31; Mark iv. 31; Luke xiii. 19.

renewal of the heart of the believer by the HOLY SPIRIT. The seed, unless quickened into life by a mysterious operation, in which God is the agent, would soon be lost in corruption, and perish : so also the fallen and depraved heart of man, if left to its own guidance, would sooner or later destroy itself, and that for ever, had not our merciful God devised a plan by which that nature which was 'dead in trespasses and sins,' might be quickened into newness of life. I wish you to dwell on this simile, which our blessed Lord has thus employed. Observe, the seed is not only made first to germinate, but it is also supposed to continue growing by the same divine assistance, until what was once 'the least of all seeds,' becomes a tree, large enough to shelter the fowls of the air in its branches. We here see the wise and scriptural distinction made between the joint work of God and man in the salvation of the soul. God, and God only, works in us both 'to will and to do what is pleasing in his sight;' in ourselves, and of ourselves, we can do nothing; but still God works in us in order that we perform what is right. If you, my beloved children, simply take the word of God as your guide, and fervently implore him 'to inform you and teach you in the way in which you should go,' you need not fear lest you should become bewildered on this important point. There is a passage on this subject in the writings of the excellent Archbishop Leighton, which is so clear that I cannot help quoting it, though I must depend on my memory for it. He observes,

‘The habits of divine supernatural grace are not acquirable by human study, or skill, or industry; they are of immediate infusion from heaven; but yet they are infused to the end that they may act and exercise themselves in the various conditions and occurrences of a Christian’s life, and by that they are made to grow stronger.’

“Is the mustard plant which I have seen growing in the garden, Mamma,” inquired Harriet, “supposed to be the plant referred to by our Saviour? I never remember seeing it more than three or four feet high, and it appears to me scarcely stout enough for ‘the fowls of the air to come and lodge in the branches of it.’

“I will answer your question in the words of Calmet, who says, ‘The mustard of our own country is very far from answering this description; but there is in the East a species to which there is no doubt our Saviour alluded. Its branches are real wood, as appears from a specimen in the collection of Sir Joseph Banks. This tree may well afford shelter and shade to birds, but whether it may equal some mentioned in the Talmud of Jerusalem, I know not. ‘There was,’ the Talmud says, ‘in Sichi, a mustard tree which had three branches, one of which, on being cut down, served to cover the hovel of a potter.’

“The mustard or sinapi genus have blossoms consisting of four petals, which in some species are of a yellow color; the seeds are contained in smooth four-cornered pods, which grow close to the stems.

“We will now pass from this plant, which has been so highly honored by our LORD’s notice of it, to the fragrant myrrh, which is so frequently mentioned in the Scriptures. It has been indeed hallowed, from its intimate connection with the history of our divine Redeemer. Let us think of him, when, in his infinite condescension, he stooped to take our nature upon him, and was lying in his homely apartment, without any attendant, save his young and devoted mother; we can then imagine we behold the wise men of the East coming in great anxiety to Bethlehem, to try and find Him who had been born king of the Jews. Guided in their journey by a heavenly beacon, the star which went before them until it was arrested over this lowly roof, they entered the house which had been so highly honored as to be permitted to contain the body of the infant Saviour. Can we wonder, my dear children, that they fell down and worshipped, in humble adoration, when they beheld that most astonishing proof of divine goodness and love which was there displayed? He, by whom were all things, and in whom were all things, without whom nothing was made;—he who was the Creator of worlds, the Upholder of all things;—and yet manifested now in the person of a helpless wailing infant! When our hearts are full of love toward any object, it seems involuntary to us to express those emotions by corresponding actions: the little child runs to welcome its beloved mother, with some little offering from its tiny stores; and thus the wise men, with hearts overflowing with

mingled feelings, after they had fallen down to worship their LORD, present to him the costliest gifts they possessed, 'gold, frankincense, and myrrh.'

"Let us now turn from the commencement of our Redeemer's work of love to its consummation: let us behold him 'hanging on the tree in agony and blood,' bearing the awful load of our sins, and 'overwhelmed with anguish when his Father's face was concealed from him: deserted by his disciples, and left alone to endure the sufferings of the cross. While our hearts are filled with deep sorrow for our sins, and with fervent love to our precious Redeemer, let us observe some of the bystanders offering him 'wine mingled with myrrh, which he received not.' Dr. Clarke observes that 'it was a common custom to administer a stupifying potion, compounded of sour wine, (which is the same as vinegar,) frankincense, and myrrh, to condemned persons, to help to alleviate their sufferings, or so to disturb their intellect, that they might not be sensible of them. Some persons out of kindness, appear to have offered this to our blessed LORD; but he, as in other cases, determined to endure the fulness of pain, and refused to take what was offered to him, choosing to tread the wine-press alone.' Dr. Clarke, in order to reconcile the different accounts that St. Matthew and St. Mark give of the drink offered to our LORD, which, by the former, is said to be 'vinegar mingled with gall;' and by the latter, 'wine mingled with myrrh,' supposes that the words used in the original

Hebrew, in which St. Matthew wrote his gospel, were similar to those employed by St. Mark, and that they were changed when the former gospel was translated into Greek.

“Myrrh constituted also part of the mixture which Nicodemus brought when he came, with affectionate care, to embalm the dead body of his LORD.* Do you remember, Harriet, the first notice of myrrh in the Scriptures?”

“Yes, Mamma,” she replied. “While the brothers of Joseph were deliberating about killing him, ‘they beheld a company of Ishmaelites bearing balm and myrrh down into Egypt;’ they then altered their plans with regard to him, and instead of killing, determined to sell him for a slave. I remember, Mamma, also, that when Israel directed his sons to go down into Egypt to buy corn, he commanded them ‘to carry down the man a present of myrrh, nuts, almonds, &c., in order to obtain favor in his sight.’”

“I, Mamma,” said Mary, “can furnish you with another notice of myrrh, which is in Exodus xxx. 23, where God directed Moses to prepare the holy oil; he was required to take, among other articles, ‘five hundred shekels of pure myrrh.’”

“Myrrh, or stacte, is a fragrant, bitter, aromatic gum-resin, which is obtained from an Abyssinian tree, though what the precise one is has not been

* John xix. 39.

satisfactorily determined. It is brought in small grains, which are of a resinous character, and Mr. Parkhurst supposes that it is obtained from the voluntary dropping of the tree, and not by making incisions into the bark."

Here Mrs. Howard paused, for the subject had already carried her considerably beyond the usual hour for closing their evening studies.

CHAPTER XV.

MYRTLE, NETTLE, NIGHTSHADE, NUTS, OAK.

And they found written in the law which the LORD commanded Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month : and that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive branches, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as it is written. So the people went forth, and brought them, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of GOD. And they sat under the booths ; and there was very great gladness.—*Neh.* viii. 14–18.

“THESE verses,” observed Mrs. Howard, “which you have transcribed from Nehemiah, introduce us to one of the three chief feasts which God appointed the Israelites to observe. They were the feast of the passover, that of pentecost, and the feast of tabernacles. It is the last of these three which Nehemiah describes in the eighth chapter of his history. By turning to the twenty-third chapter of Leviticus, and thirty-fourth of Exodus, you will learn the reasons why God appointed this feast to the Jewish people. ‘It was,’ says Brown, in his *Jewish Antiquities*, ‘first, to remind them that their fathers had lived in tents in the wilderness: secondly, to be a yearly thanksgiving after the ingathering of the harvest: and thirdly, to assure them of God’s return to

dwell among them after they had made and worshipped the golden calf. Five days after Moses' descent did God appoint the feast of tabernacles, to cheer them in their work, and to be a standing memorial in every age of the Jewish economy, of that peculiar residence which he had among them.' The first thing the Jews did on this first day of the feast, was to get some palm and myrtle branches, wherever they could find them, (Calmet says, 'There was one palm branch and three of the myrtle tree,) and then to go to a place called Mutsa, a little below Jerusalem, on the banks of the brook Kidron, for two willow branches each: one to place on the altar, and the other to be bound up with the myrtle and palms by means of a cord, silver or gold twist, according to the taste of the individual. This last was called his *lubel*, and he was bound to carry it in his hand all the first day of the feast, whenever he went out of his house, and into whatsoever place he entered. This feast continued for eight days, and was accompanied with a daily round of ceremonies.'

"You will find the Prophet Isaiah, in the forty-first chapter and nineteenth verse, recording a promised blessing of God to his Church, under the figure of planting in the wilderness, 'the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle;' and again, in the thirteenth verse of the fifty-fifth chapter of his prophecy. You will find the myrtle also noticed in the first chapter of Zechariah and the eighth verse. 'The family of myrtus, or the myrtle, are aromatic trees and shrubs, with simple opposite leaves, which are

sprinkled with small glandular points. The blossoms are sometimes white, and again rose-colored : they are either produced at the ends of the branches or they grow out between the leaves and the stalk. The common myrtle is a native of the south of Europe and of all the countries bordering on the Mediterranean. We find it noticed by the ancient historians, as being employed, on account of its rich evergreen leaves and perfumed flowers, to make the wreaths of the victors in some of the games. Allspice is a berry produced from a species of myrtle which is a native of the West Indies.' ”

NETTLE.*

“The nettle presents a striking contrast in every respect with the plant we have just been considering, being as remarkable for its coarse, repulsive appearance, as the myrtle is for its delicate beauty and fragrance.

“The family of *ustica*, or nettles, consists of more than one hundred and twenty species, and is principally composed of neglected weeds. The leaves are sometimes opposite, occasionally alternate, and are generally covered with fine, sharp, tubular hairs : in some varieties there is at the base of these hairs a small gland filled with a poisonous and acrid juice, which is thrown through these little hairy appendages, when the plant is agitated, into the flesh of those who unwarily intermeddle with it : this causes

* Isaiah xxxiv. 13 ; Proverbs xxiv. 30-34 ; Zephaniah ii. 9.

an irritating and painful sensation in the wounded part. Some species of the nettle produce a wound which is attended with more serious consequences. So noxious are these plants considered, that the name is now employed to express the unpleasant feelings which irritation causes to the mind. Whenever they are seen growing on a farm, or in a garden, they always give an unfavorable impression of the owner: so much so, that in Proverbs they are introduced into the striking picture of the slothful man, as if no more decided proof of his negligence could be given than the presence of the nettle in abundance.

"I shall call upon you, Harriet, to recite this passage for our edification."

Harriet immediately complied with her mother's request, and repeated the following verses:—"I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding: and lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction."

"You remember, Mamma, also," said Mary, "that in Isaiah's prophetic description of the miseries which were to come on Idumea, one of the dreadful list of sorrows was, 'that thorns were to come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof.'"

NIGHTSHADE.

“As we have proceeded systematically, in alphabetical order,” observed Mrs. Howard, “in the consideration of the vegetable productions alluded to in the holy Scriptures, I shall in this place briefly notice a plant which is supposed by some writers to be referred to indirectly, though not by name. The nightshade is what I allude to, and you will find the notice of it by turning to the song of Moses recorded in the thirty-second chapter of Deuteronomy and the thirty-third verse of it. Moses in that part of his song, is speaking prophetically ‘of the mischiefs that God would heap’ upon the Israelites when they ‘should provoke him to anger with their strange gods.’ Among other proofs of the unhappy condition in which they would be placed at such seasons of rebellion, he says, ‘Their vine shall be of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes shall be grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter.’ The remarks of Calmet on this passage I shall quote for your information, and they are as follows. ‘Gall is not a vegetable juice: a plant bearing berries, formed into clusters, somewhat resembling those of the vine is what we want: can it be hemlock? two species of which are very noxious plants. Hasselquist, speaking of the wild grape of Isaiah,* observes, “I believe the prophet here means to speak of the *solanum incanum*, deadly nightshade, seeing

* Isaiah v. 4.

it is a plant which is common in Egypt, Palestine, and throughout the East. Moreover, the Arabs give it a name which agrees perfectly with this expression; they call it 'wolf's grape.' The prophet could not have chosen a plant more opposite to the vine, for it grows in vineyards, and does infinite damage to them, therefore it is carefully rooted out. It resembles the vine in the creepers which it produces.

" 'This makes,' continues Calmet, 'the nearest approach to the vegetable mentioned by Moses of any plant which has been hitherto discovered. But why attribute to Sodom and Gomorrah particularly, a species of plant which grows in so many places throughout the East?'

" 'I conceive, therefore, that if "the wild grape" of Isaiah is supposed to be the deadly nightshade which grows in our own hedges, and is occasionally eaten by children, to their great danger: yet "the grape of Sodom" may be a plant growing in the neighborhood of the Dead Sea, and so named from its native soil. I shall therefore add, from Hasselquist, that he found at Jericho the *solanum fruticosum*. It is to be seen in great quantities near Jericho, in the valley of the Jordan, and in the neighborhood of the Dead Sea.' "

N U T S.*

“The history of Joseph,” continued Mrs. Howard, “has already introduced to our notice several vegetable productions: in addition to those we have examined, our present subject is also included. You recollect the articles which the aged patriarch directed his sons to take with them as a peace-offering to the court of Pharaoh; among them nuts are mentioned. Some writers suppose these were walnuts, while others, with greater probability, contend that they were pistachio nuts, produced from the tree called *terebinthus pistachio*. This is known among the Arabs by the name of *beten*, and we are led to suppose it was a tree common to Judea, since we find two cities noticed in the Scriptures, whose names are supposed to have been derived from the groves of the *beten* in their vicinity: the first belonged to the tribe of Gad, and was called *Betonim*:† the other was included in the possessions of the tribe of Asher, and was named *Beten*.‡

“I must also inform you that the Hebrew word which is generally translated oak in our English version of the Bible, is thought by many commentators to be more properly rendered *terebinth*: as, for instance, Genesis xxxv. 4, in which verse the fact is mentioned of Jacob hiding the strange gods that

* Genesis xliii. 11; Canticles vi. 11.

† Joshua xiii. 26.

‡ Joshua xix. 25.

had been carried away by his household under *the oak* that was by Shechem; and in the eighth verse of the same chapter, it is said, that Jacob buried Deborah, the aged nurse of his mother, ‘at Bethel, under an oak.’

“Calmet describes the terebinth, or turpentine tree, in the following manner:—‘Its wood and bark resemble the lentish tree, and its leaves are like those of the ash, but a little thicker and more glutinous. Its blossom is not unlike that of the olive, and its fruit grows in bunches or clusters. The tree is common throughout Palestine. Josephus informs us that six furlongs from Hebron they showed a very large terebinthus, which the inhabitants of the country thought to be as old as the world itself. Professor Forskall observes that the terebinthus pistachio has unequally pinnated leaves,* and each leaflet is somewhat oval. It is called by the Europeans, terebinth, but I saw no flowers. It is planted along the waysides, and in gardens, every where throughout Natolia.’”

O A K.

“Is it supposed, dear Mother,” inquired Harriet, “that whenever the oak is spoken of in our Bible, the word terebinth would be more correctly substituted?”

“I do not find, my dear,” replied her mother, “any objection made to the admission of the word

* See frontispiece, figure 5.

in other places: as, for example, when Absalom's death is described,* it is said, 'And Absalom rode upon a mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth, and the mule that was under him rode away. And a certain man saw it, and told Job, and said, Behold, I saw Absalom hanged on an oak.' Also 1 Kings xiii. 14; 1 Chron. x. 12; Isa. xliv. 14.

"The genus *quercus*, or oak, is one of the most useful and most widely diffused of the sons of the forest. There are more than eighty species known, nearly fifty of which are natives of North America; about thirty species are distributed through Europe, Barbary, and the Levant, and a few are to be met with likewise in Japan. In the family of oaks are included some of the most splendid ornaments of the forest and of the park, many of these noble trees reaching one hundred feet in height, and being of great circumference. They are also very valuable, both for the construction of houses and for ship-building, the greater portion of the timber used for such purposes being derived from different species of the oak, as it is considered one of the hardest and most indestructible kinds of timber. The Peruvian bark, which is so highly valued for its medicinal properties, is obtained from a tree of this genus: the cork of commerce is also furnished by the *quercus ruber*. This substance is the outer thick covering of the

* 2 Samuel xviii.

bark, which is detached at intervals of ten or twelve years, for as many as twelve or fifteen times, but after that period it degenerates. This species of oak is a native of the countries bordering on the Mediterranean.

“I must read you a short extract from the journal of Dr. Dodge, one of the missionaries sent out by the American Board of Foreign Missions, and which is published in a late number of the *Missionary Herald*. This gentleman was travelling through Syria and the Holy Land, and thus writes,— ‘ We left Stossen at six A. M., and travelled about six hours through a hilly, ledgy, rocky tract, but which still afforded much good pasturage. Almost the whole of the road was among the oaks of Bashan. The form of these trees, especially when they stand in open ground, much resembles that of large untrimmed apple trees. Much of the way they formed forests, but when they stood in the pasture ground, the whole appearance was at times exceedingly like that of a large, flourishing, but neglected orchard. Our course was about south.’ ”

“This extract proves, Mamma,” said Mary, “that this beautiful tree is by no means uncommon in Judea, although the account you had previously given us of the terebinth induced me to suppose it might be rare.”

“To convince you that this is not the case, I need only add the testimony of the traveller Lamartine to that of Dr. Dodge: both concur in the assertion, that the oak is widely diffused through the Holy

Land. Lamartine repeatedly notices it in his glowing pictures of the scenery of Palestine and Syria, and I cannot forbear reading you that passage of his journal in which he describes the view from the lofty summit of Lebanon. ‘We finally reached the last white and naked crest of the mountains, and the immense horizon of the coast of Syria unfolded itself at once to our view. The immense ocean was at our feet, boundless, or showing no other limits to the eye than a few clouds heaped up at the farthest extremity of the waves. Mount Carmel was on the left, and on the right, and far out of sight, the endless chain of the coasts of Baireut, Tripoli, Syria, Latakia, and Alexandretta: lastly, but under a confused aspect, and the gilded haze of night, were some shining points of the mountains of Taurus, but this might have been an illusion, so great is the distance. Immediately beneath our feet the descending path commenced, and after gliding on the rocks and dry furze of the ridge where we stood, we found it less abrupt, and opening from summit to summit: at first the eye rested on the gray heads of rocky hills: next upon the dark green tops of oak, pine, cedar, and carob trees: lower down again, upon gentler slopes, upon the paler and more yellow verdure of plantains and sycamores: lastly appeared gray hills covered with the leaves of olive trees: and the whole finally mingled and died away in the narrow plain which separates Lebanon from the sea.’ ”

“You have given us, indeed, Mamma,” observed

Harriet, "a tempting picture of oriental scenery, so much so, as to excite a longing desire to visit ourselves that hallowed ground."

"Lest I should make you discontented," replied her mother, with a smile, "I will close the volume, and our evening labors also."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE OLIVE, ONION, LEEKS, GARLIC.

And he (Noah) stayed yet other seven days, and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark ; and the dove came in to him in the evening ; and lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf pluckt off : so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth.—*Gen.* viii. 10. 11.

“ SOME time since,” observed Mrs. Howard, when her children were again assembled round her, “ our sympathy was painfully excited while considering the gopher wood, by the recollection of the myriads of unhappy sinners who had perished under God’s wrath during the deluge ; but to-night, the gentle dove comes, bearing its sprig of olive leaves, to cheer us, as it did Noah, with the promise of the merciful goodness of our heavenly Father. We all instinctively hail the first opening leaf of spring ; how much more joy, then, must have been communicated to the aged patriarch’s bosom, by the sight of the first green twig which had met his eyes since his long confinement. It told him also that the just indignation of a holy God was now appeased, and that the flood, his minister of vengeance, was retiring from off the earth : no doubt he viewed it as an earnest of God’s love to him, and as a promise of deliverance from his imprisonment in the ark, to the

enjoyment of once more beholding the beautiful works of nature.

“I will first give you a description of the olive tree, and we will afterward examine some of the figures under which it is presented to our notice in the Bible. I have selected part of the account given of the olive in the *Encyclopedia Americana*, as it is more satisfactory than any other work which I have consulted on the subject.

“*Olea Europea*, or common olive. This interesting tree, in the more northern districts, does not usually attain a greater height than eighteen or twenty feet, with a trunk of one or two feet in diameter: in warmer climates, however, it rises to forty or fifty feet. It grows slowly, and is very long lived. Notwithstanding its specific name, it is not a native of Europe, but it has been so long cultivated on the borders of the Mediterranean, that the period of its introduction from Asia is unknown. In its general appearance, the olive tree bears a resemblance to the osier or yellow willow, but it possesses very little beauty. The leaves are evergreen and entire, lanceolate,* and from one to two and a half inches long; and their lower surface is covered with a scaly powder, which gives them a silvery appearance. The flowers are small and white, and in some of the species are disposed in long bunches. The fruit is an oval drupe, or fleshy nut, with a thin, smooth, and usually blackish skin, containing a greenish soft

* See frontispiece, figure 1.

pulp, adhering to a rough, oblong, and very hard stone. The olive is almost a solitary example of a fruit with an oily pulp. Like all other genera which have been long cultivated, a great number of varieties have arisen from the influence of soil, exposure, and especially of different kinds of cultivation. The olive was celebrated in the mythology of the ancients. Olive wreaths were used to crown the brows of victors. By the Greeks and Romans it was revered, and was considered the emblem of peace. It furnished the only kind of oil which was known for a long time, and which was employed by most nations in religious ceremonies. Oil is still principally the product of the olive, and is consumed in many countries in immense quantities. In America we consider it chiefly as a luxury. Great quantities are used in the manufacture of soap, and in the south of Europe it is burned in lamps. The fruit has too much asperity to be eaten in its natural state, except in one or two varieties; but after being prepared in various ways, it furnishes an important article of nourishment to the inhabitants of olive countries, and, moreover, it makes its appearance on the tables of the rich in almost every part of the globe. The olive grows in every kind of soil, provided that it is not marshy. It is planted at intervals of twenty or thirty feet, as it requires plenty of air and light. The fruit is ripe about the end of November or the beginning of December, but the product is only abundant every other year.'"

"I thank you, dear Mother," said Mary, "for

this satisfactory account of the olive, though I observe one point is not noticed, with regard to which I have been desirous of information, since it is so expressly mentioned by St. Paul, in the Epistle to the Romans, eleventh chapter. I mean the two varieties of the olive which he describes as 'the wild olive tree,' and 'the good olive tree.' "

"Calmet notices them both," said her mother, "and his remarks are to this effect: the wild olive only differs from the cultivated in this respect, that it is smaller in every part. In the same manner our wild crab, which is not edible in its natural state, affords a fine stock for engrafting our fine apples on, and is considered the original tree from which all the most delicious apples have been obtained by cultivation. Who does St. Paul designate, Mary, by the wild olive tree?"

"The Gentiles, Mamma, are thus represented, while the Jews, God's favored people, are compared to the good olive tree. I suppose he means to say that Jews and Gentiles were by nature the same, and that the former had only been made to differ by the great goodness and mercy of God, who had watched over them, and had brought them into his garden, the Church."

"Your ideas are correct, Mary," replied her mother, "and I will only point out one practical lesson which we may draw for our own instruction. We are all, alike, wild olive trees, incapable, if left to ourselves, of bringing forth any good fruit; and it can only be by the great mercy of God that we have

been transplanted from the wilderness of sin into the garden of God's Church, and there made to bring forth the fruits of good works, to the glory of his holy name.

"You will find, in other parts of Scripture, the Church of God compared to the olive tree. Jeremiah, in the eleventh chapter of his prophecy and sixteenth verse, when addressing the Jews, declares, 'The LORD called thy name a green olive tree, fair, and of goodly fruit;' and he pursues this figure of speech during several verses, in which he denounces the evil that was coming on the Jewish nation for their sins."

"I remember, Mamma," observed Harriet, " passages in which the destruction of the olive trees is mentioned among other judgments. And you recollect when Moses was going to resign his charge of the Israelites, just before his death, and while he was setting before them, in such a solemn manner, 'the blessing and the curse,' he told them that their conduct would determine which of the two was to be their portion. When he was warning them what the curse would be, among other things, he mentions this, 'Thou shalt have olive trees through all thy coast, but thou shalt not anoint thyself with oil, for thine olive trees shall cast their fruit.'"

"In that beautiful chapter of Deuteronomy which I was learning the other day," observed Mary, "Moses cautions the Israelites against forgetting God, after he had showed them such great mercies: and among these he particularly mentions 'olive trees

which thou plantedst not.' David remarks, 'I am like a green olive tree in the house of God.' "

"I am much pleased," said Mrs. Howard, "to find you are both so well furnished with texts on this occasion. Can you tell to what purpose the olive wood was devoted in the construction of the Jewish temple? "

The young ladies could not recollect the peculiar use to which it was appropriated, and their mother therefore informed them.

"Solomon is said to have made the two cherubims for the holy of holies, of the olive wood, and afterward to have overlaid them with gold: the same material was also used 'for the doors of the oracle,' and for 'the posts of the door of the temple.' The wood of the olive is described as having 'a very fine grain, being very hard and yellowish, and as being susceptible of a brilliant polish; but though so highly esteemed on this account, it is too valuable a tree to be much used in the arts.'

"As we have found this tree and its fruit referred to so frequently in the Bible, you will not be surprised to learn how much it is cultivated in Judea at the present day. Dr. Edward Clarke observes, in his travels through the Holy Land, while journeying from Napolose to Jerusalem, 'The road was mountainous, rocky, and full of loose stones; yet the cultivation was every where marvellous: the limestone rocks and stony valleys of Judea were entirely covered with plantations of figs, vines, and olive trees.' One spot visited by this gentleman is

so interesting, not only from its connection with our present subject, but also from far higher and sacred associations, that I must read you the account of it. It is his visit to the Mount of Olives to which I allude.

“ ‘We ascended to the summit of the Mount of Olives, passing on our way a number of Hebrew tombs. Here, indeed, we stood on holy ground; and it is a question which might reasonably be proposed to Jew, Christian, or Mohamedan, whether, in reference to their respective nations, it be possible to attain a more interesting place of observation.’ ‘It was on the Mount of Olives that the Messiah delivered his prediction concerning the downfall of Jerusalem.’

“ ‘The army of Titus encamped upon the very spot where its destruction had been foretold. It was here that the Saviour beheld the city, and wept over it. As we descended from the mountain, we visited an olive ground, always mentioned as the Garden of Gethsemane. This place is, not without reason, shown as the scene of our Saviour’s agony the night before his crucifixion, both from the circumstance of the name it bears, and its situation with regard to the city. Titus, it is true, cut down all the wood in the neighborhood of Jerusalem; and were this not the case, no reasonable person would regard the trees of this place as a remnant of so remote an age. But as a spontaneous produce, uninterruptedly resulting from the original growth of the mountain, it is impossible to view even these with indifference. We found a grove of aged olive trees of immense

size, covered with fruit almost in a mature state. We provided ourselves with specimens from these trees for our herbarium, and have found few things more gratifying than were these trifles, as presents to those friends who wished to obtain memorials from the Holy Land. It is truly a curious and interesting fact, that during a period of little more than two thousand years, Hebrews, Assyrians, Romans, Medes, and Christians, have been in possession of the rocky mountains of Palestine; yet the olive still vindicates its parental soil, and is found at the present day upon the same spot which was called by the Hebrew writers Mount Olivet,* and the Mount of Olives:† in the first instance eleven centuries before the Christian era, in the latter five.’

“Dr. Clarke also refers to this spot with reference ‘to that sublime, but simple description given by the prophet, when the aged monarch of Israel gave to heaven the offering of his wounded spirit: and David went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot; and all the people that were with him covered every man his head, and they went up weeping.’”

The daughters of Mrs. Howard listened with extreme interest to the description of this spot, which is so interesting to every heart that knows and loves the blessed Saviour. They regretted that Dr. Clarke saw such good reasons for thinking these

* 2 Samuel xv. 30.

† Zechariah xiv. 4.

olive trees could not have been contemporaries with the solemn and momentous scenes of the Redeemer's sufferings.

"Remember, my dear girls," said Mrs. Howard, "Dr. Clarke only expresses his opinion; others have viewed the subject in a different light, and have been decidedly convinced that these trees now standing on the Mount of Olives were the same that shaded our LORD in his visits to this favorite spot. The traveller Lamartine belongs to the latter class, and perhaps it would be but right to give you his account also of the Mount of Olives."

On the Misses Howard expressing their desire to listen to the narrative of Lamartine, their mother opened the volume, and read as follows:—

"I observed behind me about an acre of land, touching on one side the elevated bank of the torrent Cedron, and on the other rising gently to the base of the Mount of Olives. A low wall of stone, without cement, surrounds this field, and eight olive trees, standing at about twenty or thirty paces distance from each other, nearly cover it with their shade. These olive trees are among the largest of their species I have ever seen: tradition makes their age mount to the era of the incarnate God, who is said to have chosen them to conceal his divine agonies. Their appearance might, if necessary, confirm the tradition which venerates them. Their immense roots, as the growth of ages, have lifted up the earth and stones which covered them, and rising

many feet above the surface of the soil, afford to the pilgrim natural benches.

““ A trunk, knotted, channelled, hollowed, as with the deep wrinkles of age, rises like a large pillar over these groups of roots ; and as if overwhelmed and bowed down by the weight of its days, it inclines to the right or left, leaving in a pendent position its large interlaced, but once horizontal branches, which the axe has a hundred times shortened, to restore their youth. These old and weighty branches, bending over the trunk, bear other younger ones, which rise a little toward the sky, and have produced a few shoots, one or two years old, crowned by bunches of leaves, and darkened by little blue olives which fall at the feet of the Christian traveller.’ ”

“ Thank you, dear Mother,” said Harriet, “ for this passage from Lamartine. I believe I shall take him as my authority, and fancy that I am quite convinced of the antiquity of these picturesque trees, since it certainly adds greatly to the interest I feel in them to think so.”

ONIONS.

And the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat ? We remember the fish we did eat in Egypt freely, the cucumbers and the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic : but now our soul is dried away : there is nothing at all beside this manna before our eyes.—*Numbers xi. 4-6.*

“ You may, perhaps, feel inclined to wonder at the perverseness of the Israelites,” observed Mrs.

Howard, "in repining thus sinfully after indulgences so little alluring to us, as onions, leeks, and garlic; but in those warm countries they are considered as peculiarly inviting to the poorer class. Professor Forskall found many varieties cultivated in Egypt, and he declares that their excellence is such, that travellers in that country cease to wonder at the Israelites longing so immoderately after them in the wilderness. Pliny informs his readers that onions and garlic were reckoned among the dainties of Egypt. Some writers have supposed that the word rendered leeks in this verse did not signify the same with our leek, which belongs to the onion family, but was rather a luxury of the table obtained from the stalk of the lotus, or water lily of the Nile, which, it is said, the Egyptians chop up and eat during summer season as a salad. Onions, leeks, and garlic all belong to the genus *allium*, and are too well known to you to need a particular description, especially as the hour is a late one."

CHAPTER XVII.

PALM TREE.*

And the children of Israel came to Elim, where were seventy palm trees.—*Exod.* xv. 27.

And he (Solomon) carved all the walls of the house round about with carved figures of cherubims, and palm trees, and open flowers, within and without.—1 *Kings* vi. 29.

“THE palm tree is supposed to derive its name from its remarkably straight and upright form: it frequently attains the height of one hundred feet.

“The family of palms is so numerous, that if I recollect right, it constituted formerly an appendix in itself to the Linnæan system; and it still continues to compose one of the families in the natural system of Jussien, under the name of palmæ. This tree, in its various forms, has been pronounced ‘the pride of tropical climates, contributing more than any other vegetable production to give a peculiar and imposing character to the landscapes of those regions. Their lofty, straight, and unbranching trunks, crowned at the summit by a tuft of large radiating leaves, give them an aspect entirely unique, and far surpassing that of any other tree in majesty. Besides the gran-

* Leviticus xxiii. 40; Deuteronomy xxxiv. 3; 2 Chronicles xxviii. 15; Ezekiel xl. 16, 22, 26, 31, 34, 37; xli. 18–26; John xii. 12, 13; Revelations vii. 9; Judges iv. 5; Psalm xcii. 12.

deur of their appearance, many of them scarcely yield to any other vegetable in useful properties.'

"There are numerous species of the palm: among them are the magnificent, and at the same time useful *cocos nucifera*, or cocoa-nut tree; the no less serviceable *phœnix* or date palm; the less showy, but beautiful sago palm, the *sagus rumphii* of the East Indies; and the graceful palmetto, fan palm of our southern States."

"You have given us a tempting list, dear Mother," observed Harriet, "and I hope you will be able to afford us a sketch of some of them, more especially since you have told us that they even exceeded the aloe in their useful properties."

Her mother replied that when she had presented all the information that she had collected on this subject, she thought her daughters would agree in saying that she had not deceived them by false expectations on this point.

"The stalks of the palms are generally full of rugged knots, which are the vestiges of the decayed leaves; for the trunk is not solid, like other trees, but its centre is filled with pith, round which is a tough bark full of strong fibres when young, which, as the tree grows old, hardens, and becomes ligneous. To this bark the leaves are closely joined, which in the centre rise erect, but after they are advanced above the sheath which surrounds them, they expand very wide on every side of the stem, and as the older leaves decay, the stalk advances in height. When the tree has grown to a size for bearing fruit,

its leaves are six or eight feet long: they are very broad when spread out, and are used for covering the tops of houses, and for similar purposes.'

"I shall commence my specific descriptions with an account of the phœnix or date palm, for several reasons, but more especially because this was the kind of palm that was most common in Palestine. Jericho was designated by Moses as 'the city of palm trees,' and travellers inform us that the date palm still grows around Jericho and Engedi.

"I wish to call your attention particularly to one fact recorded by Moses, who remarks,* that when the weary Israelites came to Elim, they pitched their tents there, as it was abundantly supplied with water, and likewise, because in this spot were found growing 'threescore and ten palm trees.' There is a peculiarity connected with the palm, which serves to illustrate this passage. It is remarkably fond of water, and Sir Robert Wilson, in his Expedition to Egypt, asserts, 'that when the English army landed in Egypt, in 1801, to expel the French from that country, Sir Sidney Smith assured the troops, that wherever date trees grew water must be near; and so they found it on digging, usually within such a distance that the roots could obtain moisture from the fluid. Burckhardt also confirms this assertion.' When Dr. Shaw visited Elim, he found three out of the twelve wells filled by the sand-drifts, which are so common in Arabia. But he remarks that this

* Numbers xxxiii. 9.

loss was amply compensated by the increase of the palm trees, which, instead of threescore and ten, amounted, at his visit, to upward of two thousand. Denon observes that he found in Egypt several kinds of the date palm, some of which rose to sixty feet, while others were even eighty or one hundred feet in height; he also mentions the fact of its being in the leaves of this tree that figs are wrapped when they are sent to this country.

“Several parts of the Holy Land and Idumea that lay contiguous to it, are said by the ancients to have abounded in the date tree. So much so, indeed, that in some of the coins which were struck by Vespasian, to commemorate his victories in the East, and which have come down to modern times, the conquest of Judea is emblematically represented under the figure of a disconsolate female reposing under a palm tree. On one of the coins of Titus, his shield is represented as suspended on a tree of this kind. The name of *phœnix* is thought by Dr. Shaw to have been given from the circumstance of the young palms rising so uniformly around the trunk of those which had died or had been cut down. It was the date palm also which furnished the branches which were carried before conquerors in former times as emblems of victory. This fact I allude to particularly, since it was thus the short season was commemorated in which our blessed Redeemer triumphed over the prejudices and opposition of the world he came to redeem from eternal misery.”

“Can you give us any reason, Mamma,” asked

Mary, "for the palm being so much used in ornamenting the temple? In Ezekiel's vision almost every part of the sanctuary was adorned with palms."

"An ingenious writer,"* replied Mrs. Howard, "suggests a very satisfactory answer to your inquiry. 'The straight and lofty growth of the palm tree, its fertility and longevity, the permanency and perpetual flourishing of its leaves, and their form resembling the solar rays, make it a very proper emblem of the natural, and thence of the divine, light. Hence, in the holy place, or sanctuary of the temple, (the emblem of CHRIST's body,) palm trees were engraved on the walls and doors between the coupled cherubs. Branches of them were used as emblems of victory, and doubtless believers, by so doing, are meant to acknowledge the supreme Author of their success, and to carry on their thoughts to the divine light, the great conqueror over sin and death.'"

"Thank you, Mamma," said Harriet, "for this satisfactory explanation."

"I will proceed now to the description, of the date tree," continued Mrs. Howard. "'It is described as being a majestic tree, rising sixty feet and upwards: the trunk is straight, simple, scaly, and elegantly divided by rings, and crowned at the summit by a tuft of very large long and pendent leaves. These are ten or twelve feet long, composed of alternate narrow leaflets folded lengthwise. The fruit is

* Robinson's Calmet.

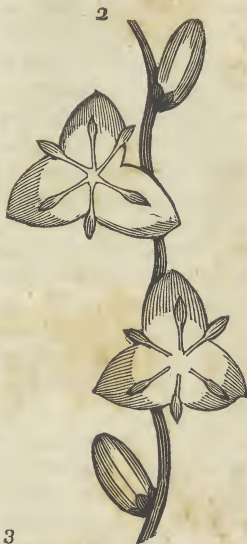
disposed in ten or twelve long drooping branches.' The dates which we see exposed for sale in this country are of an inferior quality, and prepared in a careless manner. They are pressed into such a mass, that it is impossible to form any idea of their original shape. On one occasion, I had the pleasure of tasting some very fine ones which were brought by a gentleman, an intimate friend of mine, from Tunis, where they grow in perfection. You will probably smile when I tell you what kind of covering enclosed these choice dates: this was nothing less than the skin of a camel's head, which formed a truly appropriate specimen of oriental customs. With this bag of dates, this gentleman sent also a branch of the tree, as it had been plucked from the parent stock, with the fruit on it, in order that his family might have the satisfaction of seeing the manner in which the dates grow.

"I have met with an engraving of the flower and fruit of this tree, which I will now show you, as it will give a better idea of it than any words of mine can convey.* One branch contains the fruit, which is, however, not more than half the size of that which grew on the stalk sent by my friend to this country.† By looking at the figure marked 2 on the plate, you will see the blossoms which produce the fruit, and figure 3 represents one of the unproductive blossoms.

"The fruit of the Tunisian date which I have

* See plate 10.

† See plate 10, figure 1.



DATE PALM.—Plate 10.



mentioned was of oval shape and yellow color, and consistence resembling some of our fine sweetmeats, and was quite different from the dark unsightly mixture sold as dates in our shops. The bunches of fruit, which weigh from twenty to twenty-five pounds when of a good quality, are often sold for less than a dollar each. 'Almost every part of this valuable tree is converted to some use: the wood, which is very hard and almost incorruptible, is used for building. The leaves, after being macerated in water, become supple, and are manufactured into hats, mats, and baskets: the footstalks afford fibres, from which cordage is made. The nuts, after being burned, are used by the Chinese in the composition of Indian ink. Palm wine is made from the trunk. The Arabs pretend that this tree reaches the age of two or three hundred years.'

"As you expressed a wish to hear an account of some of the other species of this genus, I will gratify you by reading a very good description of the cocoa palm which I have selected from the Missionary Journal of Messrs. Bennett and Tyerman, during their residence in the Society Islands. 'Next to the bread-fruit, the cocoa nut tree, *cocos nucifera*, is the most valuable product of the soil in these islands. It grows to the height of seventy or eighty feet. The stem tapers gradually to the top, without branch or offset; but at the summit it shoots forth from twenty to thirty vast leaves, some of which are six or seven yards in length. These hang in a graceful tuft all around the crown of the trunk. When young

and small, the leaves are entire, but as they lengthen they divide into narrow slips, each of which has a wiry rib running up the middle and diverging from the spinal stalk of the leaf, as it may be called. Though strong at the point of contact with the tree, the weight of this enormous foliage would soon break it off, but where it branches out, a cloth-like substance called aa, whose fibres run at right angles with each other, is formed, and invests the tree with its strong and needful intertexture. This runs also twenty-four inches up the leaf, and affords it a complete support. From among the junctures of these leaves with the head of the stalk, spring branches of tendrils, in which grow the fruit, which is a nut enveloped with a husk, about two and a half inches thick; this is green on the outside, and is composed of close, tough fibres, which run longitudinally from end to end, presenting an oval shape, which is rather angular at the sides. The shell is hard and black; the kernel is white, lining the shell, and containing the milky water within; but the nut being often brought to this country, no minute description can be necessary in this place. Some trees will produce a hundred nuts at the same time, each containing from half a pint to a quart of this liquor; and these noble fruits closely encircle the top of the stem, like a leaded belt or coronet, beneath the pendent crest of plume-like leaves. The trunk of this remarkable tree is a bundle of fibres which are closely connected by a cementing matter. Within two or three feet of the ground these fibres spread forth into thousands

of small roots, which insinuate themselves through the superficial earth, and spread horizontally twelve or fourteen feet from the centre in all directions. This cordage must be amazingly strong, for it supports the whole tree, with all its bulk, and weight of stem, foliage, and fruit. The bark seems to be of little use to this species, as it generally rots off toward the ground at an early stage of its growth. We have seen cocoa stocks decayed through the heart, and others of which large portions of the outside had been cut away to a considerable depth, which yet continued to thrive, and bear leaves and nuts. The timber (if these live fagots of well-packed fibres can be called timber) is of some value, being used for rafters in sheds, and cut into short lengths for fences: spears were formerly made of it. The leaves are turned to better account, being platted into mats, and shaped into baskets, and occasionally manufactured into bonnets. The fibres of the husks are twisted into ropes and lines of various sizes, which are exceedingly strong. The shell of the nut is converted into drinking cups, lamps, and other small vessels. The water is a delicious beverage, always cool and refreshing: those who have only tasted it in this country have no idea what a luxury it is between the tropics. The kernel, when scooped out of the shell, is either eaten raw, or, being squeezed through the fibres of the husk, yields a pleasant and nutritious milk, which is sometimes mixed with arrow root, and a kind of pudding is compounded of both together.'

“ ‘The kernel also produces the oil which is now so abundantly made here by a process formerly described in this journal. Thus timber, fuel, mats, baskets, ropes, drinking vessels, wholesome beverage, good food, liquor strainers, bonnets, oil, and bowls for lamps, are produced from this convenient tree ; which, with the bread-fruit, were there no other sources of supply, would nearly meet all the necessities of the people of these islands.’ ”

When Mrs. Howard had closed the volume from which she had been reading, Harriet observed, “ You did not, indeed, dear Mother, deceive us with false expectations with regard to the great capacities for usefulness possessed by the palms.”

“ I shall not notice the other varieties of this genus,” said Mrs. Howard, “ as they are not alluded to in the Bible, and you can obtain information with regard to them at some other time. We will now dismiss the subject for the present.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

POMEGRANATE, POPLAR, PLANE TREE, ROSE, RUE,
AND SAFFRON.

POMEGRANATE, *PUNICA GRANATUM*.*

"CAN either of you inform me," said Mrs. Howard, "how the pomegranate was introduced into the ornaments of the Jewish sanctuary?"

Mary replied, "I recollect, dear Mother, that the pomegranate is described, in the first book of Kings and seventh chapter, as adorning the top of the pillars of Solomon's temple, and also by Moses, as forming part of the ornaments of the dress of the high-priest. He was directed upon 'the hem of it to make pomegranates of blue, and purple, and scarlet,' and to place 'a golden bell' and a pomegranate alternately round the border." Her mother here remarked, "This was perhaps to intimate that a mere nominal profession of religion, however high sounding it might be, would be unavailing, unless accompanied by the corresponding fruits of a holy life."

"I suppose, Mamma," said Harriet, "that the fruit of this tree must have been highly valued by the Jews; for when Caleb and his companions were

* Exodus xxviii. 33, 34; Numbers xiii. 17-25; 1 Kings vii. 18; Canticles iv. 13.

sent to spy out the promised land, we are told that they brought on their return, besides the large cluster of grapes, some of the pomegranates and figs, as specimens of the fertility of the soil."

"Yes, my dear," said her mother, "this fruit is always highly prized in warm climates, from the refreshing sweetness of its juicy pulp; and it is, besides, manufactured into a pleasant beverage. I will give you a short description of it, which is taken from a popular work on botany.

"This tree rises several feet in height, sometimes ten or twelve: it is covered with a brownish bark, and is divided into many small branches which are armed with spines: the leaves are oblong or lanceolate,* pointed, veined, and of a deep green color, and placed upon short footstalks.

"The flowers are large, of a rich scarlet color, and stand at the end of the young branches: the corolla † is composed of five large, roundish, slender petals, with narrow claws, by which they are inserted into the calyx: the calyx is large, thick, fleshy, tubular, of a brownish red color, and divided at the extremity into five pointed segments: the stamens are numerous and yellow: the fruit is about the size of an orange, and crowned with the five teeth of the calyx: the rind is thick, tough, and, externally, reddish, internally it is yellowish, and filled with a red juicy pulp; this, when the fruit is in a wild state, is a pure and very strong acid, but in the cultivated

* See frontispiece, figure 1.

† See plate 2, figure 2.



THE POMEGRANATE TREE



POMEGRANATE.—Plate 11.

plant it is sweet, and highly grateful, and much resembles the flavor of a fine orange: this pulp is included in nine cells, within which are lodged numerous oblong angular seeds, enveloped in a distinct crimson coat.' When the fruit is fully ripened, it almost always bursts its outer covering, and exhibits its showy interior. This plate, which I have copied for you,* exhibits a pomegranate when in this tempting state, and it is very true to nature."

POPULAR.†

They burn incense under oaks and poplars.—*Hosea* iv. 13.

"The genus *populus*, or poplar, consists of about twenty species, several of which are natives of this country, and are remarkable for their beauty of foliage. That alluded to in the texts you have cited is supposed to be the white poplar, or *populus alba*, which often grows to the height of ninety or a hundred feet, and sometimes measures five or six feet in diameter at the base. It forms a striking feature in the landscapes of those countries of which it is a native, not only from its great majesty of appearance, but also from the beautiful effect which is produced by the striking contrast between the deep green of the upper surface of its leaves, and the pure white of the lower."

* See plate 11.

† *Genesis* xxx. 37.

P L A N E T R E E.

“I shall merely glance at one tree, namely, the platanus, or plane tree, which is not indeed mentioned in our English Bible, but which is thought to be alluded to by some commentators, in the thirty-first chapter of Ezekiel and eighth verse, under the name of the chestnut. This word in the Septuagint is said to be translated platanus, or plane tree; and it seems not improbable, as this tree was very highly prized in the East for the luxuriant shade which it afforded. The plane, button-wood, *platanus occidentalis*, is among the largest productions of the forest, and is sometimes found measuring from ten to fourteen feet in diameter.

“Its trunk and branches are covered with a smooth pale green bark, the outer skin of which detaches itself in fragments, leaving the trunk of a whitish lead color: the leaves are alternate and lobed, in imitation of the hand: the flowers are united in little globular drooping balls.”

R O S E.

I am the rose of Sharon.—*Canticles* ii. 1.

“Our present subject, my dear children, is not only attractive in itself, because the sweet perfume and modest beauty of the rose have rendered it a universal favorite in all ages and climates, but possesses additional charms, when we look upon it in the light in which it is represented by Solomon—as an emblem of the exceeding preciousness and beauty which our

blessed Redeemer presents to the eyes of his people. Not only is he to them an object of adoration, and his perfections the theme on which they most delight to dwell, but from everlasting to everlasting the angelic intelligences have been occupied in celebrating his praises. And when our faint hosannas ascend on high from the censer of our great high-priest, we may hope that they are echoed and re-echoed through the vault of heaven, by thousands of blessed and holy spirits. Some commentators consider the words rendered here 'the rose of Sharon,' as intended to point out some sweet-scented bulbous flower, instead of the rose. Calmet declares, however, that after due examination of the subject, he prefers receiving the Hebrew phrase, as indicative 'of a rose not yet blown, but overshadowed by its calyx;' and he continues, 'If to this we add the idea of a wild rose, we approach to the strength of the expression, "I am a wild rose flower not fully blown, but enclosed as yet."' The rose of the East is exceedingly fragrant, and has been pronounced by many oriental writers, the queen of the garden. She has given her name to one of the natural families of Jussieu; and the apple, pear, peach, cherry, strawberry, and many others in addition to the rose genus, form together the family of rosacæ. It would be impossible for me to enumerate the number of varieties, since they are multiplying every year. In the East, this favorite flower is cultivated in great quantities, and in those regions where the ottar of roses is manufactured, whole acres are appropriated to it, and

the fragrance which arises from them perfumes the surrounding air. You may conceive the extent to which the rose is cultivated in such places, when I assure you that I have seen a calculation which assigns one hundred pounds of rose leaves as the requisite quantity for the manufacture of one table spoonful of this fragrant and costly ottar of roses.

“From the sweet perfume of the beautiful rose, our attention will next be turned to a plant which is entirely the reverse of it in every respect.”

R U E.

Ye tithe mint, and rue, and herbs.—*Luke xi. 42.*

“The *ruta graveolens*, or rue, is a humble garden plant which is devoid of beauty, and possesses a very nauseous smell, particularly when bruised. The stem rises to about two feet in height, and bears alternate leaves which are very much divided. The color of the stalk and leaves is a dull pale green: the flowers are yellow and disposed of in bunches at the ends of the branches. It was formerly in high repute for its medicinal properties, but is now very little used. About twenty species are known, all of which are natives of the eastern continent.”

SAFFRON.*

“The saffron, which now claims our attention, is, if I am not mistaken, only mentioned in the solitary text you have cited, and it is there briefly noticed by Solomon as one of the ornaments of the garden. The saffron, or crocus, has a flower consisting of one leaf, which is shaped like a lily, and funnel formed, the tube widening into six petals; the stigmas are very large, and of a bright yellow color. It has a bulbous root, and long narrow grassy leaves, with a white furrow running through each leaf.

“We are here introduced to an old friend, which you have been accustomed to see growing in our gardens, and with the deep yellow stigmas of which you have often amused yourselves in childhood, by rubbing them on your hands to color them.

“There are a great many varieties of the crocus, and the most of them are called the spring crocus, from blooming at that season of the year. You have often stood with delight on one of the first spring days, to examine the delicate, grass-like leaves of the crocus as they peeped out of their frozen bed, and in their pretty blossoms gave us almost the first harbinger of the approach of milder weather. The crocus sativum, or saffron, does not belong to this part of the genus, but to another and much smaller division, which bloom in the autumn. In external appearance, however, there is a strong

* Canticles iv. 14.

resemblance between the two classes of the crocus. When the saffron is cultivated for sale, it is planted in rows, the bulbs being set about six inches apart: the yellow stigmas are picked out and dried in a kiln, between layers of paper. They are then pressed into the form of cakes. Two pounds of dried cakes is the average crop of an acre, for the first year's planting; and after that, for the next two years, twenty-four pounds is the amount often obtained."

CHAPTER XIX.

SHITTIM WOOD, SHITTAH TREE, SPIKENARD.

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering. And rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, and shittim wood. And they shall make an ark of shittim wood. And thou shalt make staves of shittim wood. Thou shalt also make a table of shittim wood.—*Exod.* xxv. 1, 2, 5, 10, 13, 23.

And thou shalt make an altar of shittim wood.—*Exod.* xxvii. 1.

And Bezaleel made the ark of shittim wood. And he made the altar of incense of shittim wood.—*Exod.* xxxvii. 1, 25.

And he made the altar of burnt-offering of shittim wood.—*Exod.* xxxviii. 1.

AN interval of some days had passed since the young Howards' last conversation with their mother on those subjects, the narrative of which is contained in this little volume, and they now returned to their evening studies with increased alacrity. When they were once more arranged around their mother's work table, she commenced the conversation by the following remarks:—

“When we had occasion to examine the history of the gopher wood, you expressed a particular interest in the subject, from its intimate association with

* Isaiah xli. 19.

the ark, the appointed means of preservation to Noah and his family, during that deluge which swept the earth with its devastating flood, as a punishment for the guilt and rebellion of man against his great Creator. It will, doubtless, not be uninteresting to you to enter upon the examination of that wood which has been consecrated in our memory, not only from being employed in forming the outer covering of the Jewish tabernacle, but still more, because from it was manufactured by Bezaleel the altar of incense, and indeed almost all the woodwork of the tabernacle, particularly the sacred ark of the covenant, which is so striking a type of our blessed Redeemer. He, through whom and by whom alone our guilty and condemned race can presume to enter into covenant with a holy and just God. Interpreters of Scripture have not positively agreed what particular species of wood is intended to be designated by the term *shittim* wood. The most plausible reasons are, however, offered for supposing this material, which was so abundantly used by the orders of God, was obtained from *acacia vera*, or black *acacia*, and which is one of the trees from which the useful gum arabic is obtained. It is about the size of a mulberry tree; its bark is of a grayish black; its wood of a pale yellow color; the leaves are pinnate,* like those of the locust, which tree belongs to the same genus; the branches, like those of the latter tree, are full of thorns, and spread

* See frontispiece, figure 5.

very much ; the blossoms are pea-shaped, and of a yellow color, and the seed is contained in podded seed vessels. Dr. Shaw, in his travels, observes, 'The acacia vera, or black acacia, is much the largest, as well as the most common tree in Arabia Petrea, and we have reason to suppose that it is the same as the shittim wood. The tree abounds with flowers of an excellent smell, which further induces me to take it to be the same with the shittah tree which, in Isaiah xli. 19, is joined with the myrtle, and other sweet-smelling plants.'

"Mr. Bruce remarks, 'As the sycamore in Lower Egypt, so the acacia in the Thebaïd, seems to be the only indigenous tree.' Jerome describes it as growing, at the time he wrote, in the deserts of Arabia ; and says that it resembles the whitethorn in the color of its leaves, but not in its size ; since the tree is so large that it affords fine planks. The wood is fine-grained, hard, and tough, and extremely beautiful in appearance, so that it was selected for the finer parts of work. Several other authors mention the black acacia as very common in Egypt, around the Red Sea, and near Mount Sinai ; and concur in giving the same testimony to its valuable properties, as a wood for building ; so that I think we may be quite willing to receive this tree as the shittim wood of Moses."

"Indeed, dear Mother," observed Harriet "the reasons you give in support of the opinion that the shittim wood and the black acacia are the same tree, are entirely satisfactory to our minds."

SPIKENARD.*

While the king sitteth at his table my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.—*Canticles* i. 12.

Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits, camphire with spikenard, spikenard and saffron.—*Cant.* iv. 13, 14.

Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of JESUS, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.—*John* xii. 3.

“Great differences of opinion have prevailed, my dear children, with respect to the spikenard. The attention of two learned men was turned to the examination of it nearly at the same time, though in different hemispheres. One was Dr. Gilbert Blane, a member of the Royal Society, in England; the other Sir William Jones, in India. They were led to very different conclusions, but as each have served to illustrate Scripture, I shall give you a brief notice of their publications on the subject. I believe I cannot do better than quote part of Dr. Blane’s observations. He says that a brother of his, in a letter, dated from Lucknow in India, in 1786, mentions ‘that while travelling with the Nabob vizier, upon one of his hunting excursions toward the northern mountains, he was surprised one day, after crossing the Rapti, about twenty miles from the foot of the hills, to perceive the air perfumed with an aromatic smell; and upon asking the cause, he was told that it proceeded from the roots of the grass that were bruised or trodden out of the ground by the feet of

* Mark xiv. 3.





SPIKENARD, *NARDUS INDICA*.—Plate 12.

the elephants and horses of the Nabob's retinue. The country was wild and uncultivated, and this was the common grass which covered the surface of it, growing in large tufts close to each other, very rank, and in general from three to four feet in height. As it was the winter season he could find none of it in flower. But he collected a quantity of the roots to be dried for use, and carefully dug up some of it to be planted in his garden at Lucknow. It there thrived exceedingly, and in the rainy season shot up spikes six feet in length.' He then mentions that he sends with the description a drawing of the plant when in flower, and likewise of the root. And these I have copied for you from Calmet."* She then exhibited the painting to them.

"Dr. Blane remarks that the whole plant possessed a strong aromatic odor, and he is confident that there is great reason for supposing the subject of his communication to the Royal Society to be the same with the *nardus indica* of the ancients. In confirmation of this opinion, he cites a passage from Arrian's History of the Expedition of Alexander the Great into India, which is as follows:—'During Alexander's march through the deserts of Gadrosia, the air was perfumed by the spikenard, which was trampled under foot by the army: the Phœnicians who accompanied the expedition, collected great quantities of the spikenard, as well as of the myrrh, which they carried home as articles of merchandise.'

* See plate 12.

With regard to the virtues of the plant, Dr. Blane remarks that it was highly valued by the ancients as an article of luxury : it constituted their favorite perfume, and was so highly valued by them, that the poet Horace declares that as much of it as could be enclosed in a small box of precious stones was considered an equivalent for a large vessel of wine.’”

When Mrs. Howard had finished reading this account of the spikenard, Mary remarked that the writer had at least succeeded in rendering his description interesting, and she felt anxious to hear what Sir William Jones could say on the contrary side of the question.

“ Since you are desirous to learn what plant your favorite Sir William Jones, a man so learned in oriental literature, concluded to be the genuine spikenard, I will give you the result of his observations.

“ In order to procure information from the learned natives, it was necessary to know the name of the plant in some Asiatic language : the very word nard occurs in the song of Solomon, but the name and the thing were both exotic. The Hebrew lexicographers imagine both to be Indian, but the word is in truth Persian. The Arabs have borrowed the word nard, but in the sense of a compound ointment. Whatever it signified in old Persian, the Arabic word sumbul, which signifies an ear or spike, has been substituted for it. A Mussulman physician of Delhr assured me that the Indian plant known by the name of sud was the ancient spikenard. This he described, and assured me that its fragrance was so great, as to





SPIKENARD, ANOTHER VARIETY.—Plate 13.

have obtained for it the name of the subterranean musk.' The Hindoo teacher of Sir William Jones brought him what he thought was the same plant under another name, assuring him that it was the spikenard; and informed him that it was manufactured into a highly valued essence or ottar, like that of roses, and that when placed in little boxes or phials, it was considered a great luxury. Sir William Jones winds up his remarks in this manner: 'I am persuaded that the true spikenard is a species of valerian, produced in the most remote and hilly parts of India; the dried specimens of which look like the tails of ermines, and rise from the ground resembling ears of green wheat, both in form and color.'

"Some of the young plants of this last-named spikenard were brought from their native soil to Gaya, and were there placed in charge of Mr. Burt, who took a drawing of one when in blossom, and sent the drawing and description to Sir William Jones. A copy of the engraving of this in Calmet, I shall now exhibit to you," observed Mrs. Howard, "and will also give you the description of it.*

"The leaves of the valeriana (spikenard) were entire, the inner radical, or root leaves, were cordate or heart-shaped; † the rest smaller, partially lanceolate, and the seeds of the plant were covered with a pappus or feathery appendage.' Mr. Burt observes, 'The plants now received are growing in two small

* See plate 13.

† See frontispiece, figure 7.

baskets of earth. In each basket there appears above the earth between thirty and forty hairy spike-like bodies, which I may justly compare to the tails of weasels: from the apex of these there is a smooth, lanceolate,* three-nerved leaf or two shooting forth. The root is from three to twelve inches long: the stem, the lower part of which is involved in this fibrous hairy sheath, is perennial: the upper part is from six to twelve inches long: the leaves are in two pairs: the lower pair are opposite, oblong, and forming a complete spathe or sheath: the upper are opposite, cordate, or heart-shaped,† with the edges waved and pointed: the flowers are produced in what botanists term a corymb.‡

“After weighing the remarks of both these learned men, Calmet says, (and I believe, Harriet, we must coincide with him,) ‘The result of these observations is, first, that there grew in Arabia and Syria a fragrant grass which is considered as a nard, and was known under that name: second, that the true Indian nard or spikenard, was a plant of a different kind, and not a native of Syria, and that the ottar or essence of this plant is called nard or spikenard.’ Calmet also concludes that these two kinds of spikenard account for the repetition of the word in Canticles iv. 13, 14.”

“Then, dear Mother,” said Mary, “when it is said that the sister of Lazarus brought ‘the ointment

* See frontispiece, figure 1. † See frontispiece, figure 7.

‡ See plate 2, figure 7.

of spikenard, very precious,' to anoint the head of Jesus, you suppose the ottar or essence of spikenard was intended?"

"I presume so," replied her mother; "and every Christian female may draw a beautiful lesson from this anecdote of the affectionate Mary, as it is recorded in the twelfth chapter of St. John's gospel. A few days before our blessed Saviour's sufferings in the garden of Gethsemane, the grateful family at Bethany, desirous to pay the last tribute of tender respect to their beloved Master, 'made him a supper,' at which Martha waited on her sacred guest. Mary's character appears to have been unusually ardent, and her affections more lively than those of her sister: actuated by such feelings, she was desirous to offer some striking proof of her devoted attachment to her Lord, though his glories seem not at that time to have been fully understood by her: she, therefore, brought an offering of as costly a character as she could command, which was a box containing a pound of this fragrant ointment of spikenard, and with it she anointed the feet of the Saviour, and wiped them with the hair of her head. It would seem that she felt desirous to consecrate what was once merely valued as adding to her personal charms, by employing it in the service of her beloved Master. I wish you to observe the words which follow having made this perfumed offering, 'The house was filled with the odor of the ointment.' Thus it is, my dear children, when the Christian female brings her heart with all its affections as the

most valuable offering which she can present to Him who has loved her and purchased her with his precious blood, this heart, once polluted by sin, becomes sanctified by the HOLY GHOST, a meet and holy shrine perfumed by the incense from God's altar; and wherever she appears, whether in that home where her strongest attractions are found, or when called by duty abroad, that moral fragrance is diffused around her which springs from a heart perfumed by the breath of prayer and praise. She will truly gladden the eyes and cheer the hearts of all who come within the sphere of her gentle influence. But the hour admonishes me that it is time for us to attend to our evening devotions."

CHAPTER XX.

THORNS,* THISTLES, TARES, THYINE WOOD.

And unto Adam God said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it : cursed is the ground for thy sake ; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. *Thorns* also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee.—*Gen.* iii. 17, 18.

WHEN the family were again collected around the cheerful fireside, Harriet observed that she was afraid the subject for this evening's conversation would not be as interesting as usual. "Perhaps," she said, smiling, "I may bear the thorn and the thistle a little malice from the wounds which they often inflict on me."

"Notwithstanding your prejudices, Harriet," replied her mother, "you may not improbably find that if you are so disposed you may derive instruction even from an enemy. You say that you feel disinclined to discuss our present subject, but it has been productive to me of much profitable meditation. When I pass by a field overgrown with thorns and thistles, I feel disposed to pause awhile, and view them as emblems of the hateful passions which the

* Exodus xxii. 6 ; Numbers xxxiii. 55 ; Psalms lviii. 9 ; cxviii. 12 ; Proverbs xv. 19 ; xxiv. 31 ; Canticles ii. 2 ; Isaiah xxxiv. 13 ; Hosca ii. 6 ; Matthew vii. 16 ; Luke vi. 44 ; John xix. 2.

sin of our first parents has brought into the world. As I behold them taking possession of the waste ground, and excluding all valuable growth from it, I see a picture of what human nature is when left to its own guidance. And when I find them appearing in strength and vigor in the field that was so lately ploughed and cleansed by the husbandman, I read a lesson for my own instruction. Even after the heart has been renewed by the HOLY SPIRIT, the remaining sinful disposition, the body of sin, as St. Paul calls it, will be continually springing up, and if not watched, and prayed against, and resisted, in the strength of divine grace, will grow to such a height as to choke the heavenly seed. Thus the sight of a field overrun by thorns and thistles, may send the Christian to bend his knee in prayer, that he may be enabled by 'the Spirit of CHRIST to mortify the deeds of the flesh.' The excellent and holy Archbishop Leighton acknowledged that he found 'the heart even when renewed a natural mother to the noxious weeds of sin, and only a stepmother to the good seed of divine grace.' It is not then to be wondered at if the generality of Christians, whose habits of life are so far below his, should be made to feel this painful truth still more forcibly."

When her mother had ceased speaking, Mary inquired if the thorn and thistle were to be met with all over the world? "If they are, Mamma, like other plants, natural to some spots and not to others, I cannot understand why they should be mentioned as forming part of the curse for Adam's sin; the

dreadful consequences of which are felt in every spot on the globe."

"You are right, my dear, in making this inquiry, since your mind has been perplexed by the subject. I hope that I shall be able entirely to relieve your embarrassment. The words translated in our version 'thorns and thistles' occur in several other places, and are then sometimes rendered merely 'thorns,' again 'briers,' and again 'thistles.' So that when used in the announcement of the curse, we do not know exactly whether a particular species of plant is meant or not. Calmet thinks it most probable that the term is used for all those noxious plants and shrubs by which the labors of the husbandman are impeded, and which are only fit for burning. He says the meaning of the word used is 'to fret, tear, or wound.' Thus, my dear Mary, your difficulties are met and answered; for you will find all over the globe such troublesome thorny plants are natural to the soil.

"The geniota, or spinosa vulgaris, called also furze, is supposed by some to be the thorn of the Scriptures, and it is one of the most mischievous shrubs on the face of the earth. Scarcely any thing can grow near it; and it is so thick set with prickles, that it is almost impossible to touch it without being wounded. It is very prolific: almost half the year it is covered with flowers, which produce pods filled with seed. Besides, it shoots out roots far and wide, from which suckers and young plants are continually produced. Such provision has the just God made

to fulfil that curse which he has pronounced on the earth, because of the crimes of its inhabitants.' *

"In Miller's Gardener's Dictionary, I find the fact mentioned of this plant being much used in parts of England to heat their ovens. 'It has a pea-shaped flower, generally of a yellow color, with small and rather blunt leaves: the whole plant is beset with thorns. These plants propagate themselves very plentifully by seeds: so that when they are established in a spot of ground, they soon spread over the place; for as the seeds ripen, the pods open with the warmth of the sun, and the seeds are cast out with elasticity to a great distance round, and these soon vegetate.'

"With respect to the thorn mentioned in the New Testament, in the parable of the sower sowing his seed, some of which 'fell among thorns,' and again, by the different evangelists as being made use of to form that crown which was placed on the brow of our blessed Redeemer, I must here make a few remarks. The word which is used in the original in these places, is thought by several commentators to refer to a species of acacia or locust, which bears a sharp thorn, while others think the crown was woven from a prickly plant named acanthus. This latter plant has leaves resembling those of the thistle: the flowers are labiate or lip-shaped, like those of the snap-dragon, or ranunculus: the under lip of the flower is divided into three parts: the cup of the flower is composed of prickly leaves.' Calmet sug-

* See Hale's Vegetable Statistics.

gests still another plant, as being in his opinion probably that platted by the soldiers to crown the head of JESUS. This, he informs us, the traveller Hasselquist describes as the nabka of the Arabs. He says, 'It is common in the East, and a plant more proper for the purpose could hardly be selected; it is armed with thorns: its branches are supple and pliant: its leaves are of a deep green, and resemble those of the ivy. Perhaps the enemies of CHRIST chose this plant in order to add insult to punishment, by employing a plant approaching in appearance the ivy, which was used to crown emperors and generals.'* It is the opinion of Dr. Adam Clarke that Christians have erred in magnifying the sufferings of CHRIST from this circumstance, and that insult rather than suffering was intended by them in this action. He says there is a passage of an ancient author quoted by Dr. Lardner, which casts much light on the indignities offered to our blessed LORD. 'Caligula gave Agrippa the tetrarchy of his uncle Philip, with the right of wearing a crown. When he came to Alexandria, on his way to his tetrarchy, the inhabitants of that place were filled with indignation at the thoughts of a Jew having the title of king, and they showed their indignation in the following manner. They brought a sort of idiot into the theatre, and placed him on a lofty seat, that he might be seen by all: they put a diadem on his head made of the papyrus, and his body they covered with a mat or

* See also Russel's Palestine for a description of the same plant.

carpet instead of a royal cloak. On seeing a piece of reed lying on the ground, they picked it up and put it in his hand in place of a sceptre. The people then thronged about him, some pretending to consult, and others to do him homage, and all made a confused noise, crying out in the Syriac language, Lord, Lord; hereby showing their ridicule of Agrippa, who was a Syrian.' There is certainly a most extraordinary coincidence between this account and that which the evangelists give of the closing hours of our Saviour's life."

THISTLES.*

"There are a variety of families of plants known by the common name of thistle, which are disseminated all over the globe, and I must give you a particular account of some peculiarities connected with them, in order that you may be able better to understand how admirably they are adapted to fulfil the parts assigned them by God as instruments of fulfilling the curse which he pronounced on the earth at the fall of our first parents.

"They all, I believe, belong to the class syngenesia, which consists of compound flowers like the dandelion, and which produces a far greater quantity of seeds than those of any of the other classes of plants. Many of the highly valued flowers of our parterres, with the greatest care, will only perfect a small por-

* Genesis iii. 18; 2 Kings xiv. 9; Job xxxi. 40; Hosea x. 8; Matthew vii. 16.

tion of seed. On the contrary, if you examine a flower of the thistle, you will not only find innumerable seeds, but that each seed is furnished with a feathery or downy appendage called pappus by botanists. I have often seen you, in your childish sports, pull to pieces the dried head of a thistle, and then blow the downy seed with your breath, and smile with childish glee as you observed the seed flying on its feathery wings in all directions. But I believe I may venture to say that while thus employed the thought never occurred to you that you were acting as the agents of an all-wise Providence, in carrying on His mighty scheme. In order to show you how wisely the Almighty adapts his means to the end he wishes to produce, I will read you an extract from a forcible writer on this subject. 'In the curse pronounced on the ground, there is much more implied than generally meets the ear. The amazing fertility of some of the most common thistles and thorns renders them the most proper instruments for the accomplishment of the sentence against man. Thistles multiply enormously: a species called the carolina sylvestris bears ordinarily from twenty to forty heads, each containing from one hundred to one hundred and fifty seeds. Another, called the acanthum vulgare, produces above one hundred heads, each containing from three to four hundred seeds. Suppose, we say, that these thistles produce at a medium only eighty heads, and that each contains only three hundred seeds. The first crop from these would amount to twenty-four

thousand. Let these be sown, and their crops will amount to five hundred and seventy-six millions, and so on, till the fourth year's growth will be seven thousand nine hundred and sixty-two trillions six hundred and twenty-four thousand billions. A product more than sufficient to stock the surface of the globe, so that no other plant or vegetable could possibly grow, allowing but the space of one square foot to each plant. The *carduus vulgarissimus*, or common hedge thistle, besides the almost infinite swarms of winged seeds which it sends forth, spreads its roots around many yards, and throws up suckers every where, which not only produce seeds in their turn, but extend their roots, and propagate like the parent plant, and stifle and destroy all vegetation but their own.*

“The genera of the *acanthum*, *carduus*, *chicus*, *sonchus*, *carolina*, &c., all bear the name of thistle in common, and each contains numerous species which are diffused over the whole globe. The roots of the *chicus arvensis*, or Canada thistle, have been known to descend to the depth of nineteen feet, and it will sometimes throw out horizontal shoots of eight feet in length, and is a most noxious weed. I believe my account of the thorn and thistle will quite satisfy your minds that these vegetable productions, both by their abundance and their pestiferous qualities, are well qualified to accomplish the task assigned them by their great Creator.”

* Hale's Vegetable Statistics.

T A R E S.*

“The plant which will now be presented to your notice is a troublesome weed, but our LORD refers to it in the illustration of a very solemn and interesting subject, and one in which we all, with the whole race of Adam, are deeply concerned. I shall call upon you, Mary, to read the verses in which our Saviour makes so striking an allusion to the common fact of the appearance of the troublesome tares in the fields of wheat in Judea.”

Mary read from the twenty-fourth to the thirty-first verse of the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, and then the verses from the thirty-sixth to the forty-fourth of the same chapter; in which our LORD first gives the parable of the tares of the field, and afterward the explanation, in a manner calculated to impress our minds with a lively sense of the solemnity of the last closing scenes in this world's history, and which should deeply affect us, since we are all, individually and collectively, to bear a part in the great drama.

Mrs. Howard then remarked, “Tares, *zezania*, or darnel, is a weed still well known in the East. It grows among the wheat, and if it is allowed to remain through carelessness, and the ears are ground up with those of the wheat, the flour thus produced will cause the most unpleasant, and sometimes dangerous consequences, to those who unwarily partake

* Matthew xiii. 24-30, 36-44.

of the bread made from it. The reapers do not separate the tares, but after the grain is threshed, they are rejected by means of a sieve. Calmet remarks, when quoting the account from Professor Forskall, 'Nothing can more clearly elucidate the plant intended by our LORD in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, and which is rendered tares in our version. First, it grows among the wheat as in the parable: secondly, the reapers do not separate the plants; both grow together until harvest: thirdly, after the threshing they are separated in the same manner as is mentioned in the parable, they are separated by hand, then gathered into bundles: fourthly, if any of the tares remain, they are finally separated by winnowing, a process preparatory to the wheat being gathered into the store-house, and then the injurious seeds are consumed by fire to prevent the mischief spreading.'

"The leaves of the tare are rough: the stem is shorter than that of the wheat: at the top of the stem rises a long ear with little husks, which surround it at equal distances, and contain three or four grains covered with a down or plume. When the plant is grown, and ready to blossom, it can readily be distinguished from the wheat."

THYINE WOOD.*

"Mr. Robinson, in his American edition of Calmet, briefly notices this wood, which St. John, in the

* Revelations xviii. 12.

book of Revelations, speaks of as among the precious merchandise of Babylon, the mighty city. 'Thyine wood, the wood of the thyia, or *thuja articulata* of Linnæus, an aromatic evergreen tree, resembling the cedar, and found in Libya. The wood was used in burning incense.' "

When Mrs. Howard closed her books for the evening, Harriet acknowledged that though she had been averse to turn from the fragrant spikenard to the repulsive thistle and thorn, she had nevertheless been much interested, and she hoped that it had not been an unprofitable subject as her mother had handled it.

CHAPTER XXI.

VETCHES,* VINE, WILLOW, WORMWOOD.

"I MUST call upon Harriet," said Mrs. Howard, on the following evening, "to read the striking passage from Isaiah which you have noted down, as the best way of introducing the plant which at this time first presents itself for our consideration."

Harriet opened her Bible, and after having found the passage, read as follows:—"Give ye ear, and hear my voice; hearken, and hear my speech. Doth the ploughman plough all day to sow? doth he open and break the clods of his ground? When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat, and the appointed barley, and the rye, in their place? For his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him. For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod. This also cometh forth from the LORD of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.'"

When Harriet had concluded, her mother observed, "I wished you, my dear, particularly to notice

* Isaiah xxviii. 23-29.

these verses, since a lesson is inculcated in them which the proud heart of man is reluctant to learn. They teach us that even the moderate degree of intelligence requisite to perform the humble duties of a ploughman is a faint spark proceeding from Him who is the only fountain of natural, intellectual, or spiritual light. What an exalted view do we obtain of the supreme intelligence of God, when we picture to our minds a combination of all that mental and moral excellence which has enlightened our world throughout the ages of its existence; which has shone with such hallowed light in a Howard, a Newton, a Hannah More, and thousands of other luminaries; and then consider that the whole is but a feeble emanation from Him who is emphatically the Light of the world! And it should bring down every high thought and proud imagination in the creature, to recollect, that even if he shines with the lustre of a sun in the midst of his fellow-men, it must ever be with a borrowed light. God has decreed that 'no flesh shall glory in his presence.'

"But to return to our subject. Under the name of fitches or vetches, we may include all the species of the bean family which were cultivated in the land of Judea. Beans are classed by botanists under the genus *vicia*. They have slender stems which are inclined to creep or attach themselves for support to some other object. The leaves are generally pinnate: * they are also characterized by having tendrils by which they

* See frontispiece, figure 5.

attach themselves to plants, or other means of support: the blossoms are pea-shaped, giving place to podded seed vessels.

“The genus *vicia* contains more than fifty species, and they are indigenous to many parts of the East. That variety which was principally cultivated by the Jews was a creeping plant, with a small reddish or white blossom. The pods were shorter and more slender than those of the pea, and the bean when fully ripe was round and blackish. Beans constituted an important article of food among the Jews: they are mentioned among the different edibles which constituted Barzillai’s present to David.* When Ezekiel was directed to prepare the coarse bread for his long season of fasting, beans were enumerated among the other things of which it was to be compounded.

“Some commentators have contended that by the fitches of Isaiah we are not to understand beans, but a small seed like the fennel or caraway, with which the Jews were in the habit of strewing their biscuit. This they describe, under the name *gith*, as growing to the height of a foot or more, bearing small leaves and a blue flower, which, when it disappears, gives place to a seed-vessel shaped somewhat like that of the poppy, and enclosing small black seeds of a spicy smell. Calmet, however, gives the preference to the former idea, and we, with him, will continue to consider the *vicia* and fitches as the same.”

* 2 Samuel xvii. 28.

VINE.*

"We will now turn," said Mrs. Howard, "to the useful and ornamental vine, which is noticed in the Bible more frequently, and under more affecting images, than any other vegetable production whatever. You can doubtless furnish me with various passages from memory, which present the vine under affecting images to our minds."

"That which first occurs to me, dear Mother," said Mary, "is the fifteenth chapter of St. John, in which our Saviour so beautifully describes the tender interest he takes in his people, and the intimate connection that subsists between them, under the figure of the parent vine supporting its numerous branches, and enabling them to bring forth fruit by their union with it."

Mary then recited the chapter she had mentioned, which has been, and ever will be, most dear to the disciples of CHRIST in every age, and in every clime, and one which is particularly cheering in the hour of sorrow, sickness, and death, since it assures the sufferer that by these various afflictions, his compassionate Redeemer intends to purge the branches which are depending on him alone for spiritual nourishment and growth, and who are thus enabled to bring forth fruit abundantly.

* Genesis ix. 20; lx. 9; xlix. 11; Leviticus xxv. 5; Numbers vi. 4; Judges ix. 12; 1 Kings iv. 25; 2 Kings iv. 39; Psalm lxxx. 8-14; Jeremiah ii. 21; Ezekiel xv. 2, 6; xvii. 6; Hosea x. 1; Joel . 12; Micah iv. 4. Malachi iii. 11; Matthew xxvi. 29; John xv.

When Mary had recited her chapter, Mrs. Howard requested Harriet to instance one in which the vine is presented as a different emblem.

After a short pause, she turned to the book of Psalms, and read the eightieth Psalm, in which David personifies the Church of God under the figure of a vine which God had brought forth from Egypt, and planted. There is another remarkable passage in Ezekiel, in which the severe judgments that were about to fall on the Jewish nation are described emblematically by the destruction of a vine tree.

“‘There would, indeed,” said Mrs. Howard, “scarcely be time for you, were I to call upon you for the innumerable texts in which the vine is mentioned in the Scriptures. Is a remarkable proof to be given of abstinence from the indulgence of bodily appetite in the person who is ‘to vow the vow of the Nazarite,’ then it is said, ‘All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husks.’ Is the spiritual deadness of Israel to be reprovèd — ‘He is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit to himself.’ Are the judgments of an offended God about to descend upon a land stained with the guilt of its inhabitants, the prophet describes them in saying, ‘The vine languisheth,’ or is ‘dried up,’ or ‘laid waste.’ On the contrary, is the sacred messenger directed to win back the wayward child to its tender Father by the promise of his blessing, he does it under the pleasant figure of ‘every man sitting under his vine,’ or the

promise is given, that 'the vine shall not cast her fruit.'

"In this country the vine is only cultivated to a limited extent, and no dependence is placed on its fruit for the nourishment of the inhabitants; but in parts of Europe, and in the countries of the East, the people of the lower class look to the produce of it as an essential means of support. Dr. Clarke, in his travels through Palestine, describes it with its rich foliage and beautiful clusters of fruit, as an ever-present feature in the landscape. 'The wild vine of Judea is represented as growing without culture along the highways and hedges: its fruit, a small grape, which becomes black when ripe, and often does not ripen at all.' I shall detain you some time longer, by alluding to some of the local customs and peculiarities attendant on the cultivation of the vine in those countries where vineyards abound. At some future day we may enter on this subject more fully, when we shall be engaged in considering some of the ancient Jewish customs. In the twenty-fifth chapter of Isaiah, the prophet, inspired with holy ardor, describes the final triumph of his LORD, in the happy days of the millenium, under the following figure: 'And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.'

"Now, in order to understand the appropriateness of this figure to denote a scene of great happiness, I

must inform you that the season of vintage is always looked upon in vine countries as a season of peculiar joy, and is celebrated with feasts. Travellers in those regions describe the picturesque appearance of the peasants on such occasions, as they return with merry hearts from the vintage. After the wine is expressed, a sweetmeat is frequently made by boiling the pulp of the grapes down until it forms a marmalade. Some of this I once tasted, and I think it is very probable that it may be to something of this kind the prophet refers in his 'feast of fat things, and wine on the lees well refined.' There is still another allusion to the local customs connected with the culture of the vine which I cannot pass by unnoticed. You will find it spoken of in the sixty-third chapter of Isaiah, where the prophet describes, in the most solemn manner, the dreadful sufferings which our blessed LORD endured voluntarily for our redemption, under the figure of 'one coming from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah.' The prophet represents himself as seeing this person approach, and as inquiring of him, 'Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like one that treadeth in the wine fat?' With inimitable pathos, our blessed Redeemer's endurance, alone and unaided, of the bitter penalties due to our sins, is summed up in his own reply to the question of Isaiah. 'I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: I looked, and there was none to help: and I wondered that there was none to behold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me.'

There is another allusion to the same subject in Revelations, and, to my mind, there is no single verse of Scripture which gives at the same time so awful a view of the dreadful punishment due to sin, and of the infinite love of our Redeemer in enduring it for us, as this to which I refer, and in which the beloved disciple describes our LORD as 'having trodden the winepress of the *fierceness and wrath* of ALMIGHTY GOD.'

"The vine (*vitis*) grows wild at present in many parts of Europe, but it is said to have been undoubtedly brought originally from Asia, where Noah first planted it after the waters of the flood had subsided. There are numerous varieties, which differ from each other in form, size, color, taste, and of course in their valuable properties. It is propagated by planting cuttings of a foot or more in length: new varieties are obtained by sowing the seed."

WILLOW.*

"Can you give me those beautiful verses of the one hundred and thirty-seventh Psalm, in which the Psalmist so pathetically alludes to the willows of Babylon?"

"Yes, dear Mother, I remember them," replied Mary. "By the rivers of Babylon we sat down: yea, we wept when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst

* Leviticus xxiii. 40; Job xl. 22; Isaiah xv. 7; xliv. 4; Psalm cxxxvii. 2.

thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song : and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.”

“ Our weeping willow, called *salix Babylonica*, which forms so beautiful an object in our lawns and along our water-courses, from the contrast which its long, pendent, and graceful branches make with the stouter forest trees, is a native of Persia, and grew no doubt in abundance, as well as in perfection, by the rivers of Babylon. There are many species of the willow : their leaves are generally alternate and lanceolate,* with very diminutive blossoms. Most of the varieties prefer a moist soil, and are very common on the margins of brooks and rivers. This tree is first presented to our notice in the book of Leviticus, twenty-third chapter, in the directions for the celebration of the feast of tabernacles. In my account of the myrtle, I noticed these ceremonies, and you will recollect my mentioning the branches from the willows of the brook which they were required to procure. The traveller Lamartine describes the banks of ‘ the murmuring Jordan as being invested with curtains of verdure which the Thames itself might envy.’ Among the trees which formed this rich covering, were ‘ forests of willows of every species.’ ”

* See frontispiece, figure

WORMWOOD.*

And the LORD saith, Because they have forsaken my law, which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein; but have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim, which their fathers taught them: therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the GOD of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink.—*Jer.* ix. 13-15.

He hath filled me with bitterness, he hath made me drunken with wormwood. Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall.—*Lament.* iii. 15, 19.

“Wormwood, (*artemisia*,) is a genus of plants which are characterized by having a powerful and unpleasant perfume, and an exceedingly bitter taste. The stalk branches out into many smaller ones, the leaves are downy, of a dull lavender green, and are very much dissected: the flowers are small, and often of a yellow color, and are in most of the species collected into a head. Some of the varieties of wormwood, from their extreme bitterness, are considered as excellent tonics. The word rendered wormwood in our version, is considered by some commentators as intended to designate a plant different from that which we know under this name; but this is, I believe, not by any means an ascertained point.”

Mrs. Howard at this point closed her books, and folded up the list which her daughters had prepared for her. “I hope,” said she, “by closing with the wormwood, I shall not leave an unpleasant impres-

* Deuteronomy xxix. 18; Proverbs v. 4; Amos v. 7; Revelations viii. 11.

sion on your minds. We have now nearly reached the close of the winter : many of the evenings of it have been pleasantly occupied, while we have been examining the history of the botany of the Bible ; and I hope we have derived a permanent benefit from our studies. If our lives should be prolonged to another year, we may probably take up some other subject of the kind, calculated to throw increasing light on the holy Scriptures, which, I trust, ever will continue to be our favorite study. And O, my beloved children, may the ‘ word of God ever be a lantern unto our feet, and a light unto our paths ! ’ May our ‘ delight be in the law of the LORD, and in that law may we meditate day and night ! ’ ”

THE END.

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